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THE LIFE OF J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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OF

J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

BY

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON,

AUTHOR OF "ETCHING AND ETCHERS," "THOUGHTS ABOUT ART," "MODERN FRENCHMEN," ETC., ETC.

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"Il serait inutile d'être un excellent esprit et un grand peintre, si 'on ne mettait dans son œuvre quelque chose que la réalité n'a pas. C'est en quoi l'homme est plus intelligent que le soleil, et j'en remercie Dieu."

FROMENTIN.

WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS,
ETCHED BY A. BRUNET-DEBAINES.

SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET.
LONDON. MDCCCLXXIX.
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PREFACE.

I HAVE been the more willing to write a biography of Turner that it is impossible to study him without encountering the greatest of all problems in art criticism the relation of art to nature. Of all landscape-painters he is at once the most comprehensive in his study of nature and the most independent of nature, the most observant of truth and also, in a certain sense, the most untrue. This double life of Turner, as observer and artist, compels us to distinguish between art and mere observation from the very beginning, under peril of falling into snares which the subject itself has laid for us. We must understand that art and nature are not the same world, but two worlds which only *resemble* each other and have many things in common. Turner, with the instinct of genius, understood this from the first.

Turner is a most instructive subject for the student of art, because he is always and above all things the *artist*. With all his study of objects and effects, he was never a naturalist. The real motive of every one of his compositions is to realise some purely artistic conception, not

to copy what he saw; consequently he lived in a state of mental activity and feeling, which cannot be in the least understood until we know what the artistic intelligence is, and what are its necessities, its purposes, and its aspirations. If Turner went frequently to nature for material, he went to the works of great artists who had preceded him that he might profit by their example, and though he had so much originality as to astonish the public of his time, the painter never lived who was more thoroughly imbued with the great artistic traditions. He educated himself, not by copying the famous masters, but by a series of experimental pictures in which he purposely worked under their successive influences, and when he passed from these exercises to experiments for which there was no precedent, these new experiments were not undertaken for the imitation of nature, but for the extension of the possibilities of art. If there is any reader to whom this distinction is not sufficiently clear, I may make it a little clearer by observing that the essentially artistic elements of a picture may be comprised under the two heads of feeling and composition, neither of which is to be found in external nature, though it suggests both to the human spirit. Composition includes all colour arrangements, all combinations of light and shade, all groupings and contrasts of selected and modified forms. Feeling, in art, expresses itself *always* by the alteration of nature, by exaggerating and diminishing, by selecting and rejecting, by emphasis and accent. The art of a man of genius like Turner has much more in common with music than with photography. Even the enemies of painting, those who are hostile to it be-

cause they cannot understand it, do at least understand so much of it as this, that it is intensely artificial, that it is not nature.

'I know nothing of painting,' wrote Byron to Murray from the city of Titian and Giorgione, 'and I detest it, unless it reminds me of something I have seen, or think it possible to see, for which reason I spit upon and abhor all the saints and subjects of one half the impostures I see in the churches and palaces; and when in Flanders I never was so disgusted in my life as with Rubens and his eternal wives and infernal glare of colours, as they appeared to me, and in Spain I did not think much of Murillo and Velasquez. *Depend upon it, of all the arts it is the most artificial and unnatural,* and that by which the innocence of mankind is most imposed upon. I never yet saw the picture or the statue which came a league within my conception or expectation.'

Now, although Byron had much genius and some literary education, he was, as regarded the plastic and graphic arts, a thorough British barbarian, who detested, abhorred, and spat upon (the expressions are his own) the refinements which were beyond the limits of his comprehension, so that when he speaks of painting he speaks with the animosity of an enemy and the contempt of a man of rank and reputation who cannot imagine that anything may possibly be above him. But with all his coarseness and violence, with all his blindness to the beauty of painting, he sees one thing which its warmest admirers too frequently fail to see—he sees that it is intensely artificial, that it is something widely different from nature. He makes no blundering con-

fusion between art and nature, but sets himself on the side of nature against art, and in the next sentences of the letter just quoted alludes to mountains, seas, rivers, horses, a lion, a tiger, and two or three women that went as far beyond his expectation as pictures and statues fell short of it. We may safely follow Byron in keeping this distinction clear.

Another matter which we ought to understand before entering upon such a study as this is the proper function of the writer upon art. In my view, it is first to inform himself as well as he can, and then to say what he thinks with the most fearless candour, but without the slightest pretension to authority. I should be sorry to see English criticism, on any side of an artistic question, arrive at that cowardly condition too often visible on the Continent, when writers dare not venture to say what they think about artists of established reputation for fear of imperilling their own, and when the whole ingenuity of a writer on art is devoted to a search for new excellencies in the consecrated masters, even in their most trifling works, or in doubtful works attributed to them, and in the weakest and worst passages of those works. But whilst claiming the right to say what I think, without any diminution of strength of expression from deference to the opinion of others I repudiate all intention of speaking *ex cathedrâ* with any affectation of infallibility, because in matters of art criticism authority has little foundation beyond simple self-assertion. You can prove scientific matters positively, but the scientific element is not the soul of art, and when you come to consider the really artistic

element which *is* the soul of art, you will find that it perpetually eludes the measuring-tapes of positivism. What, for example, are the artistic merits of Turner? Truth of form? Certainly not; his merits were in fine arrangements of forms and colours, blended into those admirable unities which constitute his pictures.

But who in the world can *prove* that he was a fine composer, or a fine colourist? that his arrangements were good? that his pictures are admirable unities? Nobody can demonstrate these things, which in their very nature are as incapable of demonstration as the beauty of an air in music; and yet these things are the very essence of art. The writer on art can therefore never speak with the authority which belongs to the teacher of science, who announces what he can prove, and what the hearer can verify for himself. But if a prudent writer on art renounces the claim to authority, he may still hope to deserve the credit which belongs to utility. His opinions, if expressed candidly, may be of some value as a contribution to that general enlightenment which constitutes public opinion. The march of Humanity is like a procession by torchlight, in which men see their way by the light given by others and also hold up torches of their own. This is especially necessary in artistic matters, where so much is artificial, and where natural truth, even when it is perfectly ascertainable, is such an insufficient guide.

I owe much to my predecessor Mr. Thornbury, whose life of Turner, though hastily written, is full of interesting material. I have not thought it right to take all the plums out of Mr. Thornbury's book, which will still

be consulted by those who are interested in Turner, but I thought there was room for another biography executed more at leisure. I have taken my time about this, and brought it gradually to its present form, believing that it omits nothing of essential importance.

Mr. Ruskin's enthusiasm for Turner has also been a valuable help to me; perhaps all the more valuable that I do not fully share it. I do not, like Mr. Ruskin, consider Turner a being of unequalled intellect and the greatest painter of all time; I consider him a man of genius who may be ranked along with other men of genius, but no more. Comparisons, in these matters, are seldom profitable or appropriate; but the intelligent reader will not misunderstand me when I place Turner side by side with Shelley. They were two of the most poetical, the most learned, and least material of poets each in his own sphere.

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THE LIFE OF J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

CHAPTER I.

Genius and Eccentricity. — The Birthplace of a Landscape-Painter.— Turner's Birth and Circumstances.—Condition of Landscape Art.— Early Educational Influences.—Turner at School.—Paternal Encouragement.—Beginnings in Art.—Early Study of Architecture.—Academic Training.—Early Practice in Portrait-Painting.—A Professional Commencement.—Turner's Luck in Life.

THE curiosity which desires to know all that can be known about great poets who have enchanted the world for us, is often doomed to two very different kinds of disappointment. Either there is very little to be ascertained about the poet which the admirer of his genius would greatly care to know, or else the personal character and history of the poet himself seem inferior to the ideal of him which is suggested by the noble beauty of his works. We are unreasonable in our expectations of general perfection in those who have much delighted us, and enlarged our experience of sublime or sweet emotion. We forget too easily that what seems to us so admirable and wonderful in them, the divine creative power, is often a very costly gift to the mortal who has received it at his birth; that it tyrannises over him until most of his

faculties are absorbed in it, and that it entirely destroys that happy equilibrium which enables men to do, under all circumstances, what public opinion would decide to be precisely reasonable and becoming. The old popular belief in the eccentricity of genius, which sometimes took the form of unsympathising sarcasm or half-contemptuous banter, and sometimes, in kinder souls, was the origin of an especial indulgence for many errors and shortcomings, had deeper foundations in the constitution of human nature than certain unimaginative persons of our own generation appear willing to admit. The opinion which tends to prevail at the present day is a reaction from the opinion of our forefathers. They believed that genius implied, if it did not authorise, an independence of common rules which Society would be little disposed to tolerate in people of ordinary endowment. We, on the contrary, like our men of genius to be exactly like other respectable people, both in education and in habits of life, and we like it to be supposed that they can readily conform in all respects to the exigencies of established usage. It is quite true that they do not declare war against Society with the fierce disdain of Byron or the indignant revolt of Shelley, nor do they generally affect any peculiarity of costume; and yet the greatest of them still cherish, though in unobtrusive ways, the independence dear to their kind. It is needless to mention names, but if the reader will think over the short list of men of real genius in the present age, he will at once perceive that their conformity to usage is only external; that their contact with the ordinary world is, as Stuart Mill said,

slight and at long intervals, and that there are lives as quietly devoted to high pursuits as that which was led on the mount which reflects itself in the little mere of Rydal.

The life of Turner, which I am now to relate, is the life of a man of genius; and it so happens that certain influences, more or less obvious or subtle, conspired together to push this man outside the ordinary round of English existence, and to make him what is called eccentric. It would be well, perhaps, if we knew exactly what we mean by eccentricity, when we apply it to such a life as his. Do we mean that the eccentric man has no centre, or that his centre does not happen to coincide with ours? If we mean the first we imply censure, for every man's efforts ought to be centred on a chief purpose and limited by the circumference of a conscious self-restraint; but if, in calling any one eccentric, we mean only that his centre does not happen precisely to coincide with ours, then we simply state a fact which implies no more moral condemnation than if we said that the circle of his horizon was not what we see from our own windows. The existence of Turner had two centres, like an ellipse, and to these he remained true to the end of his days. He had the passion for art—that is, for expressing himself in art—and he had the far commoner passion for accumulating money. Round these two centres his existence moved with the regularity of the 'unhasting, unresting' stars. The ultimate results were a great fame and a great fortune, and such a colossal '*œuvre*' as no other landscape-painter ever left behind him, if both quantity and quality are considered.

The celebrity of the great artist is still increasing steadily. Every year adds to the number of those who are cultivated enough to understand him, and who can, at least in some degree, measure the breadth of the abyss which separates such performance as his from commonplace work in art.

The Muse of Painting, if we may imagine such a sister amongst the immortal nine, would scarcely, perhaps, if the matter had been left to her own wisdom, unaided by the counsels of Minerva, have chosen for the birthplace of the prince of landscape-painters the street where he first saw light. She might have chosen rather, if only partially wise, some beautiful city, had there been any such in the eighteenth century upon the earth, whose fair palaces of marble rose in purest perfection above groves of the oriental plane, on the last wave of green land between the purple mountains and the cerulean southern sea. In such a birthplace the marvellous child might have inhaled beauty like the air, and as he grew from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, might have accumulated in his memory a great store of wonderful unpainted pictures, to be realised by him afterwards in his art, when the skill in it came to him with time. Or, again, had the Muse been utterly unwise and left to her own unwisdom, she might have placed the child far away from all cities whatever, in the heart of some lovely land in the happiest of climates, where, day by day, the warm sun awakened a sparse Arcadian population, nestling here and there in the windings of their sweet vales. A foolish Muse might have fancied that the lovelier the land round about the

child, the fairer would be his performance; that if his eyes were saturated with beauty through every sunny day and every moonlight night, he would produce beauty by necessity, as a barrel will yield you wine if it has been filled with it after the vintage.

But however Providence acts with us, whether it be by determining specially where a child is to be born, or simply by so arranging matters that there is a certain proportion of babies of genius, whose faculties will be developed if circumstances happen to be propitious, and will remain for ever undeveloped if circumstances are unfavourable, the plain fact is that Turner was born in a situation really much better for him than those which we have just been imagining, or than any other which we should have been likely to imagine. It is, I know, a common error to conclude that circumstances have been favourable when men have achieved their success by vigorously contending against them, but in this instance there is little danger of our falling into that mistake. Landscape-painting is the most recent of the fine arts, yet it is already old enough for us to have ascertained the social conditions which produce it. We know, for example, quite positively that uneducated persons who live in the midst of beautiful scenery are entirely insensible to its beauty. If we try to find out, by talking with them, what their impressions and sentiments really are, the result is always the same: they always show that what they mean by a beautiful country is a country where the land is productive, and that an ugly country, in their language, means simply a poor one. In those exceptional cases, where the rustic mind may have some dim, unuttered sentiment of natural

beauty, it remains satisfied with the sight of the natural objects themselves, and never attempts to express its feeling about them in works of art. Theodore Rousseau was one day painting a study of an oak-tree from nature, when a peasant accosted him and asked, with the usual disdain which rustics have for landscape-painters, what was the use of making an 'image' of the tree, since he could look at the tree itself if he cared to see it? This is exactly the rustic opinion about the uselessness of landscape art, when by accident the bucolic mind becomes aware that such an art exists. We may conclude, therefore, at once, that a landscape-painter must either be born in a town or else under the influences of a town. The next question is, whether it will be an advantage to him, as a landscape-painter, that he should see much human or architectural beauty in the town, such as was visible in the most glorious cities of Greece or Italy when men's bodies and surroundings looked their best, when beautiful costumes were often to be seen, and yet more beautiful nakedness, and when the poor man might lounge in the sunshine, and feast his eyes with the glory of palaces and temples, and radiant, god-like images, on which no soot-specks fell? Here, again, the true answer to the question is not the answer which would naturally first occur. When the beauty of cities and of human life in them is sufficiently perfect to satisfy the taste of a town-born artist, he will probably paint the figure, and feel but little inducement to indulge the landscape passion, if even it could become strong enough under such circumstances to produce any conscious longing. The city, then, where the landscape-painter is born,

ought not to be very beautiful; it ought rather to be decidedly unsatisfying to the artistic sense, and the people in it ought not to be beautiful either. It would be well, too, if it were vast, so that the young genius should not escape from it too easily into the country, but be tormented with that aching of the heart which is the nostalgia of the lovers of Nature. Besides these conditions there is one which is absolutely essential—the child must be so situated that it will meet with the work of some previous landscape-painter; for art is always in great part a tradition, even when practised by the most original geniuses. There has never been an instance of a great artist suddenly arising in a community outside of artistic tradition. We speak loosely of artists who have lived in isolation, but the really isolated artist has never existed. This is so true that it is true even of the specialties of art. An accomplished landscape-painter could never be formed where there had not been a previous gradual development of landscape-painting to prepare the way for him, and educate him, even although the community were rich in sculptors and figure-painters.

The early circumstances of Turner were apparently unfavourable, but in reality most favourable, to his development. He was the only son of a London barber, and born in a narrow central street called Maiden Lane, which many of my readers will no doubt have visited for its connection with his name. The date of his birth is the 23rd of April, 1775.

It was a great thing for him that the place of his birth should be a city, and a large ugly English city, where works of art might be seen occasionally, but where the

sense of beauty could never be satisfied by the aspect of the streets and people. Equally favourable were the social circumstances of his birth. He was born exactly in that rank of society where artistic genius had, at that time, the best chance of opening, like a safely-sheltered flower. To perceive the full truth of this, we have nothing to do but imagine him born in any other than the humbler middle class. If his father had been a little lower in the world, the boy would have been fixed down to some kind of humble labour from his childhood, and held down to it afterwards by want; this at least is so probable as to be almost a certainty, for Turner's genius discovered itself very gradually, and he had no explosive originality at the beginning. But what is *quite* a certainty is, the stifling of his gift in any English family of that time which had the slightest pretension to aristocracy. If Turner had been what is called a gentleman, he would have been exposed to influences which are as deadly to artistic genius as an unbreathable gas is to the animal organism. Without any open discussion of the subject, without so much as one act of rebellion on his part, he would have known, by the subtle instinctive perception of youth, that the pursuit of art involved a mysterious degradation, and in some vague, undefinable way, was disapproved of with wonderful unanimity by the public opinion of his class. The gentry of that time were of two kinds, the educated and the uneducated; the latter in strong majority. But it so happened that the education which was given to such as knew anything at all, left them as ignorant of the fine arts as their untaught, rustic brothers, whilst it gave them in addition, the pride of classical learning, from the serene

height of which it seemed to them that the fine arts were farther than ever beneath them. The calm conviction of the classically educated gentleman that he knew everything compatible with the noble life, and that all studies but his own were degrading, was more deadly to artistic genius in his class than the simple stupidity of a purely animal existence. So effectually did the prejudices of the age repress the artistic sympathies, that even its brightest and clearest intelligences were unable to understand painting. Byron scorned it utterly, as became a well-educated nobleman; Scott, having a kinder and less scornful disposition, did not express any open contempt for it, but there is not a trace of evidence in his voluminous writings that the influences of painting had ever been really felt by him, or had any share in his education. The ideas about art and artists which prevailed in the England of our grandfathers were simply these. It was believed that painting had a practical use in handing down to posterity the likenesses of important people, and artists were considered to be clever workmen who gave proof of a certain utility to society in doing this. Besides this appreciation of portraits, there existed a futile kind of connoisseurship, which the higher intelligence of the time despised without trying to substitute anything better for it, and 'Dutch drolleries' or 'conversation pieces' afforded some amusement in drawing-rooms. Beyond these ideas the general mind of the age was a perfect blank, so far as the art of painting was concerned; and it was not possible that the gentry of that day should think of it as a medium for the expression of noble imagination, or rare knowledge, or great thoughts.

Perhaps the lower middle class, in which Turner was born, had not any clearer understanding of the subject, but at any rate it was not prevented from touching brushes and colour by the dread of losing its gentility. William Turner, the artist's father, had used a soft badger-brush for daily lathering of people's chins, and did not see any reason why his son should not use a tool not much unlike it upon canvas. The father had earned his living by manual labour of a skilful description, and so, in another way, might the son. It was of course impossible for Turner's father, or for any one else, to foresee the future greatness of his child; for he was not precocious, as Landseer was, in the kind of art which he afterwards pursued. The elder Turner probably looked upon painting simply as a profession which might turn out to be lucrative, if the youth came to be skilful in portraiture.

The date of Turner's birth, as well as the locality of it, was highly favourable to the career he had before him. The whole art of landscape-painting had been prepared for the arrival of a great genius, who, after mastering all that had been done already, should extend its boundaries in the realm of nature; and yet at the same time the art was still young enough to leave ample scope for originality. Claude Lorrain had opened men's eyes to the beauty of rich sylvan masses, to the poetry of far faint distances, and to the glory of the summer light on golden southern afternoons. He had shown, too, what a charm might be given to landscape-painting by taste and skill in composition, by a musical sense of harmony in forms and tones. But Claude, fortunately for his

successors, had never been an exhaustive genius, had never been tormented by that restless spirit of discovery which takes the freshness from so many fields. The other well-known landscape-painters, Poussin and Salvator, had opened other ranges of feeling than the amenity of Claude, but they had contented themselves with a very limited expression. It was much, however, for a successor that the notion of a possible sublimity in pure landscape should have been already exemplified and received. When Turner began to work, the two ideas that landscape might be beautiful, as in Claude, or sublime, as in Salvator Rosa, were so familiar to the general mind that every tolerably educated person had associated one of these names with the loveliness of nature, and the other with its wild grandeur. If the novelists of those days had to describe some rich and pleasant scene under a mellow light, they said that it was such a scene as Claude would have loved to depict; and if they wanted to convey an appalling sense of savageness when the story led them into a rocky country, they invoked the name of Salvator. Besides these two leading notes of beauty and sublimity, a third note had been already struck in the older landscape, that of homely, rural peace. Cuyp had painted the quiet Dutch meadow-lands in their own sunshine, and had proved that no scenery is so humble as to be beneath the attention of an artist. A whole company of clever Dutchmen had painted their muddy seas, flat shores, and more or less picturesque shipping. All these men, true pioneers of the free modern art which makes the whole visible world its studio, had gone before Turner in their several

directions, and cleared his various paths. The technical art of painting was also prepared by former experience, so that he had simply to learn it, and was not called upon to invent it. Hundreds of able men had used oil-colour soundly and well before the birth of Turner, who, indeed, never equalled the best of them in the handicraft of their common art. In water-colour his position was more fortunate still, for his predecessors taught him the safe beginnings of a good method, and led him just up to that point in education from which a man of genius can go forward by himself and brilliantly complete his art. Paul Sandby and Cozens prepared his way, doing all for him that was necessary at the time, and inducing him to adopt simple methods and quiet colouring, more favourable to ultimate mastery than the showy tricks and glaring pigments which have since become so general.

The art of painting, when in its perfection, is always composed of three elements. It is one of the forms of poetry, but besides that it is a science and a handicraft. The science is the knowledge of the appearance of things, the handicraft is the workmanlike use of colour. Turner was born with the poetic faculty, but this would have been sterile without teachers who could help him in his advance to skill and knowledge. The circumstances of his education were in many ways strongly in his favour, and when we know what he did in his maturity, and how his youth was passed, we can easily trace the influence of his different early studies and occupations in the remarkable catholicity of his taste and the variety of his performance. His mind was like a garden in

which many seeds were sown at the right time, some by his father's care, but many others also by mere accident, and as the soil was very fertile and rich, most of them grew up vigorously in due season. There was not much order in Turner's knowledge at first, but he endeavoured, with partial success, to introduce some orderly arrangement at a later period of his life.

The first influence is exercised by the father and mother. In Turner's case that of the mother can only have been hereditary, through the blood, for she became insane and was removed from his father's house. Even while she remained there the incipient evil declared itself in her violent temper. It is said that she belonged to a family of squires, the Marshalls of Shelford Manor Nottingham; but she was born at Islington, and was probably, even before her marriage, in a comparatively humble rank of life, notwithstanding her descent from Shelford. The question whether Turner's mother was, or was not, what we mean in English by the word 'lady,' has an interest for us with regard to him which is quite independent of genealogy, though genealogy is interesting also. A lady is a woman who clearly understands, and consistently practises, the refinements of a highly-civilised existence; and the most real distinction between a lady, and a woman who is not a lady, is that one is more civilised than the other, and more determined to preserve the habits of a high civilisation, both in her own person and in all those over whom she has authority. These habits are not simply habits of expense; it is cheaper to remain sober than to get drunk, and yet it is more ladylike to be sober. It does

not cost more money to speak good English than bad, or to be gentle than rude; yet a lady always, from preference, speaks correctly and has gentle manners. It so happens by the force of circumstances that there are more ladies in the upper classes than in the lower, and that there is a severer public opinion in the upper classes about most of the things which, taken together, constitute civilisation, because it is a fault in rich people (who have such great facilities) not to be clean, and cultivated and polite, when it may only be a misfortune in poor ones. There is, then, really such a thing as ladyhood, and it is one of the strongest of civilising influences. Turner, there is reason to believe, notwithstanding the position of his mother's ancestry, never came under that influence, and the want of it may have been the great reason why he was never a perfectly civilised man. We know really nothing about his mother, except that she had a bad temper, that her home was an unhappy one, that she became insane and was removed from it. Of his father we know more. William Turner, the barber, was a Devonshire man who had settled in London. His great characteristics appear to have been the especial virtues of the middle class, industry and economy. In teaching his son these two things he helped him in the artistic career itself, for without the most persistent industry the painter would never have mastered his art, and without the strictest economy in early years he would never have been able to pursue it with sufficient independence for the attainment of greatness. Thus William Turner gave his son both a sword and a shield for the battle of life, and if we were writing

an allegory we might say that on the sword was engraven the word *Diligentia*, and on the shield *Parsimonia*. Few young men need these virtues so much as a young painter, for his art bristles all over with difficulties, and until fame is won he may at any time be compelled to abandon it from sheer necessity, against which there is no defence but thrift. Happily for Turner his father cared also for his education, and sent him to school at Brentford when he was ten years old. The boy went to school afterwards in London, and lastly at Margate. What this school education did for him may not appear much if we look at it as men of very advanced culture look upon education, for it is certain that Turner showed few signs of literary training. He never, in after-life, knew any language at all. He did not know any foreign language, and he never mastered his native tongue. There is nothing surprising in this. The whole class to which Turner belonged was then, and is still, very imperfectly acquainted with the nobler half of the English tongue. 'The ignorance in this department,' says Professor Seeley, 'of those who leave school at fourteen or sixteen, is deplorable. It is far more than a mere want of precision in the notions attached to words. It is far more also than a mere ignorance of uncommon and philosophical words. There is a large class of words in the language, originally perhaps philosophical, but which have passed so completely into the common parlance of well-educated people that they cannot now be called philosophical, but which remain to the class I speak of perfectly obscure. The consequence is that such people, in reading not merely abstruse books, but books in the

smallest degree speculative or generalising, constantly mistake the meaning of what they read. It is not that they understand their author imperfectly; they totally misunderstand him, and suppose him to say something which he does not say. It is no wonder that such persons have no turn for reading.' This is quite a true account of the condition of literary culture in the class which is educated as Turner was in those three schools which he attended in his boyhood. English is not really taught in such schools, and the boys have not the time which would be necessary to the mastery of any other language, so they leave without knowing any language whatever. In a few very rare cases a taste for literature stimulates them to learn English in after-life; but the true, strong phalanx of the class goes at once energetically into business, and remains for ever totally incapable either of using the higher English itself, or of understanding it when used by others. And in addition to the general unculture of his class Turner had a personal difficulty, in his own mental idiosyncrasy. He might have been taught English by a very patient and able master, entirely devoted to him, but the master would have found the work of instruction a heavy undertaking. The truth is that Turner was one of those persons who seem born to be illiterate. He had not the literary faculty. To the end of his life he was never sure of getting safely to the end of a written sentence. He never was able to spell. And still, notwithstanding this candid admission of his deficiency, we think it evident that his schooling must have established a wide difference between him and a lad who has never

been taught anything at all, such as a Suffolk ploughboy before the invention of School Boards. His years of schooling did not make him a linguist, but it is highly probable that they conveyed a good many facts to his mind, and a certain quantity of legends and traditions, which, to a poetical temperament like his, are quite as valuable as facts. Some of the great classical traditions must have reached him in this way ; he must have heard of Greece and Rome, and been brought nearer to antiquity than those disinherited ones who live exclusively in the present. He must have learned, too, that England is not the world. It requires little knowledge of geography to be aware that the Alps exist, that there are such lakes as Como and Lucerne, such rivers as the Seine and the Loire ; and yet this knowledge, inevitable as it seems to all educated persons, is by no means universal, even now. If Turner had never been sent to school at all, it is quite possible that he might have remained ignorant, that his curiosity might never have been awakened. His father came from South Molton, a Devonshire village. If he had remained there, and not cared to educate the child, the boyish imagination of Turner would never have wandered over the noblest scenery of Europe. It is the dreams of youth which become the realities of manhood. Let us not, then, undervalue the schooling which opened wide fields for dreaming to a boy of such an imaginative temperament.

The future landscape-painter was fortunate in the localities of two out of his three schools—Brentford, by one of the richest parts of the Thames, then much less populous than it is now, and Margate, on the sea-shore.

Think of the difference between two such places as these and a place like Rugby, for example, where Dr. Arnold could find absolutely nothing to gratify his instinct for natural beauty! I have no desire to attach an exaggerated importance to the circumstances of my hero's youth, and should prefer, if possible, to steer clear of that ancient error of biographers which prophesies after the event, and shows how the kind gods watched over the great man's infancy, and led him from strength to strength. But without idealising the story of a life, we may and must attribute an enormous importance to the influences which affected its earlier years. The power of such influences depends on the inborn susceptibilities. When the idiosyncrasy is keenly alive to external nature, the scenes amidst which youth is passed leave their impress to the close of life. Every reader of these pages who has the landscape instinct knows this by his own experience. He remembers every hill and every hollow in the land of his boyhood, and if, luckily, there was a stream there, he remembers every sleepy pool and every babbling shallow. Even the very stones are like friends to him, and he pardons the hardness of their hearts. In the case of Turner, we know quite certainly that he became a great painter of sea and river, especially of the sea-coast, and of stately and noble rivers, such as the Seine and the Loire. It is, therefore, a probability which closely approaches certainty, that the Thames at Brentford, and the sea and coast at Margate, were not without influence upon his destiny, in determining the tendency of his affections. It is known, too, that he began to draw by instinct in his school-days, and that he

tried to imitate what he saw. There is a story that his first artistic attempt which attracted the notice of his father was a copy of an heraldic lion, which he had made from memory, having seen the original in the house of one of his father's customers. This beginning is interesting as a proof that, even in boyhood, he felt some reliance upon the faculty which was the mainstay of his future work, for without memory a painter of landscape effect is like a carpenter without wood.

The elder Turner at once perceived that there were artistic faculties in his boy; and instead of doing all he could to thwart them, as is the usual habit of parents, he determined to encourage them, and give his boy whatever help might be attainable. Surely this circumstance, that his father was a friend and not an enemy to his genius, counts for much amongst the many favourable powers which led Turner to wealth and fame. The father was relatively an enlightened person with regard to the fine arts. It was a great thing at that time, when the English school was so little encouraged, to know that Art was alive in England, and to be at all hopeful about the future career of a young man who dedicated himself to such a pursuit. Even in our own day, when so much noise has been made about modern art by picture-dealers and writers in the newspapers, there are still millions of people in the country who are either entirely ignorant of its existence, or else consider you eccentric and unpractical if you take any interest in it. The older Turner, like the Florentine barber in *Romola*, lived in a centre of culture, and though Maiden Lane is not in appearance more beautiful or artistic than some

street in Manchester or Birmingham, it is even yet, and was far more decidedly at that time, much closer to the artistic centre of England. It is known positively that Stothard went to get his hair cut by the barber in Maiden Lane, and that the barber and his client talked together about art, for William Turner said to Stothard, 'My son is going to be a painter.' The barber's shop was near Somerset House, and not very far from the studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is not unreasonable to suppose that, at a time when artists lived much nearer to Covent Garden than they generally do at the present day, the elder Turner would be brought into contact with others besides Stothard. A contemporary of the artist, whose name has not been preserved, said that the boy began his professional career very early, by hanging little water-colour drawings round the entrance to his father's shop, the prices being duly marked upon them, and not exceeding three shillings for each separate work of art. Supposing this to be true, and it is quite according to the character of both father and son, who knew the value of three shillings, we consider that it was an excellent thing for the young artist. It was certainly a very humble kind of publicity, and yet sufficient for a stimulus, and much more encouraging than being refused at the Academy exhibition. Not all the Academicians united had power enough to close that other little exhibition round the barber's door. If there were a few sales, they must have been an immense encouragement to a poor boy—quite enough to keep up an ardent interest in his work.

About this time he copied Paul Sandby, thus laying

the foundation of his own future excellence in water-colour much more securely than if he had tried to copy one of our brilliant modern water-colour men. He also began to work seriously from nature, no longer as a schoolboy amuses himself with sketching, but in the temper of an incipient artist. A boyish friendship with Girtin, the young genius who might have been a rival if he had lived past early manhood, strengthened young Turner in his artistic determinations, by preserving him from too much solitude in his pursuit. Girtin and Turner worked together at the trade of colouring prints: dull work, perhaps, for two great geniuses as those boys really were, and yet excellent practice for beginners in the technical business of water-colour. Neither of the two friends was likely so far to forget the culture of his own abilities as to settle down permanently to the mechanical handicraft of art without aspiring to higher things, so they both, in times of comparative liberty, made simple landscapes in the topographic fashion of those days. From the age of thirteen, when Turner left the last of his three schools, he pursued the practical work of art, in one way or another, almost without intermission till old age.

The boy did not, at this time, remain exclusively in London. He went to Bristol occasionally to visit a friend of his father, a Mr. Harraway, for whom he drew his own portrait. In London he was never without useful help, both in instruction and employment. Porden, an architect, employed him to add water-colour backgrounds to his architectural designs. When these happened to be country houses, Turner would have a certain limited

scope for the exercise of his talent in landscape, and we find that he availed himself of such opportunities very willingly, and was highly appreciated by Mr. Porden, who offered to take him as an apprentice without the usual premium. One of his educators was a perspective draughtsman, Thomas Malton, who lived in Long Acre. Turner afterwards said that he learned perspective from Malton, but Malton complained of his pupil's incapacity, and took him back to his father's house as unteachable. On a second trial Turner got on no better, and was again returned upon his father's hands. There is nothing in this which need surprise us in the least. The science of perspective, as taught geometrically by Malton, lies quite outside of the purely artistic powers, and Turner's genius was essentially and exclusively artistic. Scientific perspective is a pursuit which may amuse or occupy a mathematician, but the stronger the artistic faculty in a painter the less he is likely to take to it, for it exercises other faculties than his. Besides this, he feels instinctively that he can do very well without it. He learns natural perspective mainly by the eye, and when he works from imagination he simply *sees* the objects in his own mental vision, and draws them as he sees them, very much as they would appear to him in nature. The failure of the young Turner to learn scientific perspective is therefore quite in harmony with what we know of his intellectual constitution, and need not surprise us more than his life-long difficulty about language.

The young artist at this time was brought into still closer connection with architecture. He had already, as we have

seen, worked industriously upon architectural drawings, by surrounding the buildings with sky and landscape of his own, and in this he had given satisfaction to his employers. A step further in the same direction might make him an architectural draughtsman, and possibly, in the future, an architect. His father decided that this step should be taken, and the boy was placed, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, in Mr. Hardwick's office. This may be considered one of the most fortunate circumstances of his life. The architectural labours, which he went through with his usual diligence, must have been useful to him afterwards when he introduced architecture into his works, which he did very frequently ; but besides this Mr. Hardwick had a lively appreciation of artistic talent, saw evidence of it in his young pupil, and said that he ought to go and study at the Royal Academy. There are differences of opinion amongst landscape-painters about the utility of Academic training to an artist who desires to pursue their branch of the profession. Some landscape-painters say the Academic training is of little use to them, or that it is certainly not so useful as studies from landscape-nature out of doors ; others believe that the work done in Academies, though it has so little apparent connection with landscape, is a better preparation for the future work of a landscape-painter than the premature study of trees, and hills, and water. There are reasons in favour of the latter opinion which are not obvious at first sight, but they are of a kind which the most intelligent artists are the most likely to estimate justly. There is an almost universal illusion that landscape-painting is comparatively easy, an illusion which is based upon the truth

that accurate drawing is not essential to a landscape-painter. There are, however, other qualities than mere accuracy in good landscape-painting, and other difficulties in the representation of nature than a simple definition of its forms. The greatest difficulty of this branch of art may be expressed in a single word—complexity. The complexity of natural landscape is such that it cannot be understood, and therefore cannot be interpreted, without powers both of analysis and of synthesis which a young student is not likely to have acquired. A young student, in the presence of landscape-nature, is bewildered by the intricacy and abundance of the material before him ; he requires a simpler model to begin with, for he ought to pass from the simple to the complex ; and besides simplicity in the model, he requires permanence of effect. In a climate so changeable as that of England, not only do the effects change from hour to hour, and in distant scenery from minute to minute ; but there is never any probability that if you go to a place on three successive days, exactly at the same moment, you will find your first effect again. Every one knows how entirely different a place looks at different times, but the landscape-painter alone feels this changeableness as an inconvenience to his studies. To the mature and accomplished artist, who works from memory, aided by rapid notes, the changeableness of nature is an additional source of interest in his observations ; to the beginner, it is one of the most serious hindrances which can be imagined. Now the study of the human figure, as it is pursued everywhere in academies, avoids both these difficulties of complexity and changeableness, whilst it

thoroughly educates the eye to the perception of line, projection, and colour. It does not educate the *special* faculty of the landscape-painter, which is a peculiar kind of memory, but it prepares him for his future work by a steady training in the elementary business of art; and thus, by giving him the knowledge and power which all painters must have in common (knowledge of objects and power to represent them), leaves him free, in after-years, to concentrate his attention more especially upon the particular culture which will be needed for his own career. This, I believe, is a fair statement of the advantages of Academic study to a landscape-painter, so far as it goes; yet it might be carried farther without exaggeration. No one who is practically acquainted with the subject will deny that a figure, placed in a certain light, is as much an object under an effect as a near mountain in clear weather; it is, therefore, an initiation in the laws of effect as well as in those of form and colour. Still more decidedly may effect be studied in a gallery of statues, which is sure to exhibit permanently many of the most delicate phenomena of light and shade. You have not, it is true, in living figures or statues, those sudden and surprising revolutions of colour, which are produced in mountain scenery by changing effects of light; and it is better, in the early study of phenomena so difficult to account for, that the mind should not find itself confronted, just at first, by almost insoluble problems. What we maintain is, that Academic study is the best general initiation in the art of painting, because it gives the best opportunities for a rational advance in study, from the simple to the com-

plex, from what is permanent enough to be copied quietly to what is so transient that it can only be rendered with the help of the memory. To be a pupil of the Royal Academy was, therefore, the best thing which could have happened to Turner in his youth, even though he was not to be a figure-painter in after-life. It may be regretted, perhaps, that the Academy did not take more pains to impress upon the minds of its pupils the necessity, or at least the desirableness, of painting their pictures so as to make them last: but neither Turner nor Reynolds learned their suicidal habits in technical matters from Academic tradition: it was their own fatal ingenuity in after-life which led them to discover the arts by which a picture may be so painted that it will become a ruin during the lifetime of the artist. The Academic tradition of oil-painting is safe enough, so far as permanence is concerned. A few well-known and very permanent pigments are commonly used by students, most of them being the cheap and durable earths; nor is there anything in the Academic manner of using them which necessarily leads to the destruction of the work. But why need we argue in generalities with reference to the technical education of an artist whose works are here to bear testimony themselves? Turner began by painting soundly in oil; his unsound work belongs to his full maturity. We know on excellent authority—the authority of the owner—that the portrait which Turner painted of himself, at the age of seventeen, is still in a perfect state of preservation. The pigments used in that portrait, and the manner of applying them, were alike in accordance with the Academic tradition of the time. Another

portrait of himself, about the same age, in the National collection; is also preserved. We believe, then, that although the Academy neither did nor could do anything to develop the wonderful poetic power which astonished the world much later, it carried forward Turner's early education in a practically safe way, and taught him more than he would have learned by continuing to copy Paul Sandby, or by making sketches of landscape-nature with no better guidance than his own imperfect knowledge.

A very distinguished living landscape-painter, whose works have deservedly won public favour by their union of a fine sentiment for wild northern scenery with uncommon executive skill, earnestly recommended one of his less skilful brethren to make portraits frequently, in order to gain more strength and facility in the representation of objects. The artist who gave this advice had himself painted portraits exclusively for many years, and attributed much of his skill in landscape to this early practice in what may seem a totally different branch of art. The advice was good for the reasons we have given in favour of figure-study generally. The art of painting combines two things, the representation of objects and the representation of effects. A head is a good object to study, because its forms are not accidental, but organic, and because in hair, flesh, and eyes, it presents quite different textures, besides whatever textures of dress there may happen to be about and below the neck. A head may also be well seen as the artist returns to his work day after day, and it may be seen exactly under the same effect of light. It is, at the same time, though an organised object, free from the inconvenience of

intricacy. The structure of it, so far as it concerns an artist, is simple and easily understood, after a little study of anatomy. On the whole, a human head is the best object to study which is readily accessible everywhere, and this is the reason why it has been recommended, even for the advancement of landscape-painters.

Turner, with his usual good fortune, which generally led him to do the right thing at the right time, was admitted to the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to paint there from that great master's works. At that time he probably intended to be a portrait-painter, for portrait was then the only really lucrative branch of art, and it is very possible that if Reynolds had lived a few years longer, his great personal influence would have kept his young pupil on the path which he himself had so successfully followed. But it so happened that when Turner entered the President's studio, Sir Joshua was approaching the sad close of his labours and his life, so that his personal influence was not continued long enough to make Turner definitively a portrait-painter.

Another happy circumstance of Turner's early career was that in those days a very young artist had some chance of getting a picture into the Academy exhibition, which is always an immense encouragement in itself, quite independently of sale. The ninety years which have elapsed since Turner's boyhood have multiplied the number of artists in England so enormously, that few young men in the present day can hope to see their names in the Academy Catalogue. Turner's first picture was exhibited in 1787, he being then twelve years old. The subject of this picture was Dover Castle. After this beginning he knew that the

road to fame was open to him, if he had genius and industry. Of genius there was not as yet, nor for long afterwards, the slightest visible evidence, but the habit of industry was already formed. He kept to his early practice of washing in skies and backgrounds for architects. After some years he began to receive certain commissions for topographic drawings, or, in other words, he began to get paid for doing exactly the kind of study which at that time of his life would be the best preparation for his future work in landscape. This topographic business took him to many interesting places, and amongst others to Oxford. The natural vigour of his constitution, one of the many blessings which were favourable to his career, made him a pedestrian from the very beginning, and led him into the habit of taking memoranda as he walked. In this way he began quite early in life to accumulate that prodigious mass of observations which provided the material for his artistic productiveness. His comparatively humble birth, and the simple way of living to which he had always been accustomed, made him contented with whatever accommodation he chanced to find upon the road. He had never been spoiled by luxury, he had no gentility to maintain; wherever he went he carried with him the one comfort money cannot procure, the regularity of healthy sensation, the strength of his vigorous youth. There are many situations in life apparently much more fortunate than that of this poor young artist, but there are few in reality so enviable. Entirely free from the time-wasting obligations of people in the upper classes of society, happy with small gains, receiving constant

and sufficient encouragement, the future lying before him like the vast distances in the real world of his wanderings, his whole heart in the study of his profession, this young favourite of Nature and of Fortune began his great career.

There are people stupid enough to wonder how a poor barber's son could ever be a favourite of Fortune, as if the capricious goddess had no other gifts to bestow than money and money's worth. Her gifts are only good for their utility to the life and the work that has to be done in it. With the wealth of Sir George Beaumont, Turner might have been an artist like Sir George Beaumont, and gone on to the end of his days plotting where to put his brown tree. Even a little learning in Greek and Latin might have been the total destruction of his genius, by giving him the pride of scholarship and closing his eyes to nature and to art. In this case, then, both poverty and ignorance may have been gracious gifts of Fortune. Nor was she really unkind to him in giving for the residence of his soul that uncomely face and body. Man is an intelligence served by organs, and few intelligences have been better or more regularly served in this way than that of Turner. It is the simple truth that his legs were more useful to him than a pair of horses. His eyes were so good that when he painted he would throw a sketch on the ground, or anywhere, and work easily from it if only it happened to be the right side up. His nervous system was so sound that he could work anywhere and everywhere, and he was perfectly indifferent to those arrangements for comfort which artists usually consider

essential, and which really are essential to them. His small hand was so delicate that it could draw with a degree of executive refinement which astonishes even opticians, the most refined of all workmen in the pure handicrafts. His arm was so steady that he habitually painted on upright canvases without a mahl-stick, which all other painters find to be necessary. His constitutional strength was such that he could work fifteen hours at a stretch without weariness, and his digestion so vigorous that all extremes of living were alike to him. It is true that he was short and plain, but stature and beauty were entirely unnecessary to his work. He was tall enough to paint a large picture, and handsome enough to be himself paintable in the freshness of his youth. Had he been physically more attractive he might have been conscious of the advantage, as he was afterwards conscious of his disadvantage in this respect; and he might have felt, like other handsome men of genius, a desire to show himself to people, and shine in society, which would probably have been a great hindrance to his progress, if not absolutely destructive to his originality. Such as Nature made him, and as Fortune placed him, he was exactly so constituted and so situated that his success in art, and his happiness in it, became necessary consequences of that harmony which has been considered the highest of earthly felicities, the harmony between constitution and conditions.

CHAPTER II.

The young artist.—Dr. Munro.—Girtin and Cozens.—Turner's early work in oil. — Love and disappointment. — Absence of female influence.—A dual life. — Turner a drawing-master. — He comes of age. — First northern tour.—Dr. Whitaker.—Turner elected A.R.A.—His diploma picture.—New and old Gothic.—Professional position in 1800.

WHEN as yet a mere boy, at an age when others are preparing for some remotely future career, at an age when many have not yet even made up their minds as to the nature of their life's occupation, Turner was already actively engaged in his profession. At fifteen he exhibited his view of the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth, and studied the same year at Eltham and Uxbridge with a view to next year's exhibition. A year later, with that readiness to seize upon an impression which he retained to the close of life, we find him drawing the Pantheon after the fire, which was exhibited in 1792, the artist being then seventeen years old; and it may be observed that in a study of his at Malmesbury Abbey, for a drawing which was exhibited that year, he had taken note of a shadow playing on tree-trunks in the same spirit of observation which characterises the memoranda of his fullest maturity. Another of Turner's great permanent characteristics is visible at a very early

period of his career. No landscape-painter was ever so wide in range as he was. The exact opposite of Constable, whose art was the expression of intense affection for one locality, Turner took an interest in the whole world of landscape, and, therefore, was of necessity a traveller as well as a sketcher or maker of memoranda. Now we have only to inquire into the occupations of his earliest professional years to see at once that he got into the habit of travelling, and had full opportunities for indulging his instincts in that direction, at an age when most young men are confined by school or apprenticeship. He began by travelling in England and Wales, and had studied a great variety of scenery before his twentieth year. In 1793, being then eighteen, he was sent by one of his employers, Walker, the publisher of the 'Copper-plate Magazine,' to Kent, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire. His drawings were engraved, even at that early stage in his career—an immense encouragement to a young artist, from the publicity which engraving gives, and its consequent chances of fame. The exhibitions of the Royal Academy were open to him from his boyhood, and this encouraged him to work in colour, and not to confine himself to simple chiaroscuro drawing for the engravers. Before he was twenty he had penetrated into Wales, very probably from Bristol, and had drawn the river Monach, near the Devil's Bridge, in Cardiganshire; he had also drawn at Tintern and Great Malvern. In 1794 he exhibited five works, but the next year he exhibited eight, and the year following eleven. "At twenty he had drawn Lincoln, Peterborough, and Cambridge," besides views

in Denbighshire, Monmouthshire, and Cardiganshire. At twenty-one he had visited the Isle of Wight, besides Salisbury, Ely, and Llandaff. His first Continental excursion did not take place until some years later, but the Rhine and the Alps could be waited for with patient hope by a youth who had England and Wales for his sketching-ground, with all their rivers and hills.

Every one who takes an interest in Turner knows that when a young man he used to go with his friend Girtin to sketch at Dr. Munro's house in the evenings, and that the two young artists received as payment for their labours the sum of half-a-crown each, and their suppers. This may seem a small matter to us who think of Turner as an artistic Crœsus, but it was a pleasant help to him at that time, not only for the half-crown, the value of which it is certain that he fully appreciated, but for the kind encouragement given by Dr. Munro, for the pleasant fellowship with Girtin, and for the frequent opportunities of studying works by previous artists, of which Dr. Munro had been an intelligent collector. There were several Gainsboroughs in the house, and many water-colour drawings by the early men, Paul Sandby and others, whom Turner was destined to leave so far behind, that they seem to us at this distance to belong almost to the pre-historic ages of the world. Dr. Munro had also a collection of drawings by the old masters, including Canaletti, who may even then have led young Turner's thoughts towards Venice, which he illustrated much later with such magnificent unreality. But of all the works of art belonging to Dr. Munro at this time, it is likely that the water-colours of Cozens

would influence both Girtin and Turner the most decidedly, both because they were nearest to them in the history of art, and because Cozens was an artist of deep feeling, with a remarkably fine sense of what was noble and large in landscape, and a seriousness, sometimes amounting to solemnity, which would inevitably have great influence over two such minds as those of Turner and Girtin. Even Constable, who was so differently constituted, and who chose a path in art so different from the broad tranquillity of Cozens, admired him with such enthusiasm that, as his friend Leslie tells us, he said that his works were poetry, and his genius the greatest which had ever applied itself to landscape. Leslie had such admiration for Cozens that he said there could be no improvement upon him 'when at his best.' Of the two young men who studied Cozens together Girtin is most generally regarded as his immediate successor, because he died so early, and so did not come down to the quite modern time, as Turner lived to do. Those evenings at Dr. Munro's are, therefore, curiously historical, and especially interesting to all who care for water-colour painting, and its wonderful development in England. Cozens was there, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, which expressed itself with a poet's sweetness in his drawings; Girtin was there, in the delicate early bloom of his short life, destined like Shelley and Keats to few years of labour in his art, and yet to immortal fame. Turner was there in the strength of his youth, having already well and vigorously begun the most productive career in the history of landscape art.

The writer of these pages well remembers that he first

heard of Girtin from Leslie, who possessed a few works of his, and greatly valued them. In the 'Handbook for Young Painters,' Leslie spoke of Girtin with his usual appreciation, and gave a very beautiful engraving from a poetical evening scene of his on one of the Highland lakes. In the same work he gave a fine Italian subject by Cozens—a wood, with stone-pines rising above it against the evening light, and a vast, monotonous building, with many windows — a monastery, perhaps, or convent. Both are evidently the works of poets, but as we have been so much familiarised with lake scenery by more recent artists, the Cozens seems the more original of the two. If, however, we take the trouble to place ourselves, by a little mental effort, as far back as Girtin's time in the history of English art, setting aside all that has since been done for the illustration of Highland scenery, we shall at once perceive that it needed the instincts of genius to see what he saw in it, and to interpret it with a sentiment so exquisite. Leslie considered his style to be one of more equally sustained excellence than that of Cozens, for though Girtin died very early (at the age of twenty-seven), his mental health remained good to the last, 'and he continued to draw till within a few days of his death, though he was so debilitated that he could scarcely hold his pencil.' He acquired the power of a master very soon, and exercised it so much that the quantity of good work he left behind him is surprising to artists, especially when they know that some of his valuable time was thrown away upon a panorama of London. 'Sobered tints of exquisite truth,' said Leslie, 'and broad chiaroscuro, are the pre-

vailing characteristics of Girtin. Turner had the deepest respect for Girtin's genius, and an especial affection for some golden effects of his; he believed, too, that the premature death of his gifted young friend had removed from his path the most dangerous of all his rivals, though it is likely that if the life or death of Girtin could have depended upon Turner's decision, affection would have prevailed over ambition, and they would have contended in friendly rivalry for the suffrages of the public, without jealousy in the heart of either. Notwithstanding Turner's warm admiration for his friend, whom he sincerely believed to be superior to himself in certain qualities, it may well be doubted whether Girtin would ever have displayed such various and great powers as Turner afterwards developed. It seems much more probable that he would have ranked with such an artist as David Cox (forcible in execution and grand in sentiment, but of narrow intellectual range), than with such an unprecedentedly comprehensive artistic intellect as Turner's.

The two friends worked from nature together by the Thames as early, it is believed, as the year 1789; and they were companions at Mr. Henderson's, as well as at Dr. Munro's, in pleasant evening work. They did not, however, visit the Highlands together, though Leslie says that Girtin was known to have paid a visit to the lakes of Scotland, and Turner was drawn to them also, the year before Girtin died.

Although Turner's professional business in early life was to draw topographic views for the publishers, he was, as we have seen, an accepted exhibitor at the

Royal Academy, and this encouraged him to paint in oil. His first oil-picture seems to have been done in 1795, from one of his sketches of Rochester, taken two years before; but there is another account, which affirms that Turner's first attempt in oil had for its subject a sunset on the Thames, near Battersea, which had been seen by the artist on the previous day, when Bell, the engraver, was with him, and that Bell was also present when the attempt in oil-painting was made. The two accounts fix the beginning of Turner's career as an oil-painter in the same year, 1795; and they may possibly be reconciled by supposing that the sunset at Battersea was the first landscape experiment in oil, and the Rochester the first picture. It is evident, however, that neither of these is to be considered an absolutely first attempt in oil-painting, for Turner was now twenty, and he had painted his own portrait in oil, with considerable power, at the age of seventeen—the portrait which we all know in the National Gallery. We ought not to forget, either, that Turner had been a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and had painted in his studio at the age of fifteen. It is probable, also, that his training as an Academy student would include some practice in oil, so that neither the Rochester nor the Battersea sunset could be considered the work of a novice, though the artist who painted them had hitherto done much more in water-colour, and had not applied his knowledge of oil-painting to landscape. The technical history of Turner's youth may be told accurately in a few words. At the age of seventeen he was a fairly good painter in oil, but in a heavy though safe manner, and had over-

come all the first difficulties in the career of a portrait-painter. When he abandoned the intention of making portraiture his profession, and took to landscape, he worked in water-colour, in which he had acquired considerable skill at an early age. At the age of twenty he began to try to express in oil the knowledge of landscape which he had acquired with pencil and water-colour. At the age of twenty-two he was able to paint landscape in either of the two mediums, but remained for a long time more addicted to water-colour, and used it in preference all his life for work intended to be engraved. In later years he painted much in oil, but the influence of his water-colour practice is evident in nearly all his pictures; in many of them it is even painfully evident, so that Constable, not unjustly, called them 'large water-colours.' What interests us for the present is that Turner's whole career was foreshadowed in everything before the expiration of his minority. Whilst yet a minor he was a painter in water-colours, a painter in oils, a considerable traveller within the limits of his native island, and his works were already engraved. At twenty he was not preparing for life, but really lived already, and had entered thoroughly upon his career, not in a vague, general way, but in all its several departments, except etching on copper and engraving in mezzotint, whilst even for these his early use of the pen and the wash of neutral tint was the best of all possible preparations.

Turner's destiny in another very important matter appears to have been settled for him at the very threshold of manhood. It is a commonplace that marriage

affects the fate of a man more than anything else except the circumstances of his birth; but in the ordinary walks of life the chances are generally that the consequences of marriage will be favourable. A man is tied to his shop or his office, and does not feel more fastened down to his counter or desk because he has a wife to welcome him at home when the slavery of the day is over. In ordinary occupations the work to be done has a definite character, and requires the simple application of ordinary abilities and common industry; it is not a succession of hazardous enterprises, undertaken with the whole energy of extraordinary faculties. The life of a painter like Turner is really a succession of hazardous enterprises, in which he risks his time and genius, just as a poet does when he composes works without any certainty of sale. For these great attempts, many of which were failures at the time from the worldly point of view, he needed absolute personal independence and the most perfect privacy. His sense of the importance of this privacy was so strong that he would admit nobody into his painting-room, and he liked to be in places where nobody could possibly find him. But, besides privacy, he valued liberty; the liberty of the artist, the liberty to make an excursion when he felt it to be necessary or simply helpful to his work. Marriage would have been perilous to this kind of independence; and if Turner had been married early in life it is possible that he might have contented himself with being happy, if he had found happiness, and abandoned the ambition to become great. His fate was settled otherwise; an early disappointment made him give up all

thoughts of marriage, and left all his peculiarities, including the peculiarity of being a genius, full liberty to develop themselves without restraint.

In those early days, when Turner's professional work was that of a topographical draughtsman, when he increased his income by practising as a drawing-master, it is related that he loved the sister of one of his old schoolfellows, and that they were engaged to be married; but that the marriage never took place because, during a long absence of Turner's, his letters were intercepted by the young lady's stepmother, who disliked the match. When Turner came back he found his betrothed engaged to another, to a man for whom she had no affection, and yet she would not break off this new engagement because the wedding-day was very near at hand, and she believed that matters had gone too far for her to retreat with honour. Notwithstanding all that Turner could say or do to prevent it, the sacrifice was consummated; and he remained single all his life in consequence of this bitter disappointment.

The tradition is, that Turner's absence lasted two whole years; but it is difficult to believe this. We know very little of the circumstances, for we do not even know exactly what Turner was doing at the time, nor where he was during his absence; but it seems in the highest degree improbable that, as a young lover, he would have endured to be separated from his betrothed for two whole years, or anything like it: such a pedestrian as he was then would have walked, rather, across the distance which divided them. But this is one

of those stories, half-legendary already, which one cannot wholly believe nor yet quite disbelieve. At the same time, from their very lack of substance, such stories are difficult to criticise. When there are dates, for example, the critic has some ground to go upon, for he can ascertain from other sources what the subject of the history was doing at the time fixed; but here we have no date, except a supposition that the event may have happened some time about 1796. Again, it is said that Turner went abroad to study his art, and that this absence on the Continent was the cause of the separation: but the catalogues of the exhibitions mention no Continental work of Turner until the year 1803, when he was twenty-eight years old. We may, however, admit as highly probable that Turner may have had a disappointment of this kind in his youth, since few men remain confirmed old bachelors unless they have had one or more such disappointments. And although this legend is alike without names and without dates it is circumstantial enough not to be wholly disregarded, and is said to have come from the nameless lady herself, through friends or relatives of hers. What we positively know is, that Turner remained a bachelor, and apparently in a more decided spirit than that of Etty, who passed through a succession of unfortunate attachments and disappointments. It is said that the girl whom Turner loved condemned herself to the life-long misery of an ill-assorted union; but we know that the painter entered upon half a century of celibacy—of celibacy without chastity—a life in which he formed indeed connections with the other sex, but connections

of a kind which could do nothing for the elevation of his mind or for the removal of his defects.

Fortunate in so many things, Turner was lamentably unfortunate in this; that throughout his whole life he never came under any ennobling or refining feminine influence, either in marriage or out of it. His mother was bad-tempered, and finally even insane, having to be separated from her husband, and placed in seclusion. The best hope for him, after this first misfortune, lay in a happy marriage with some cultivated lady, or at least with some woman who had a delicate, feminine sense of what was becoming. In early life, considering his own humble position in society, he was not likely to make what is called by worldly people 'a good match,' but he might have met with a girl who had a natural good taste and refinement, as many have who are not exactly 'ladies' in the conventional sense of the word. This chance he lost for ever by his absolute renunciation of all ideas of marriage. There still remained for him one possibility. One of his mistresses might, by chance, have been a superior person: this has happened occasionally in such connections, though rarely: it happened, for example, in the connection between Shelley and Mary Godwin, which was not at first a marriage in any sense but their own; and it happened also in the case of Byron and the Countess Guiccioli. Both these ladies, though their conduct was not moral, were persons of culture and refinement, who kept their lovers up to a better and higher kind of life than they would probably have followed without them. This is especially true of the Countess Guiccioli, who partially reformed Byron

by making his life relatively decent and respectable in comparison with what it had been before she knew him. Mary Godwin did not reform Shelley, merely because he did not need that kind of reforming, but she gave him intellectual companionship. Turner, as great a poet as either of these two, though he expressed himself in a different medium, never knew, during the whole course of his life, what it was to have such companionship as that with any woman. He had not even, so far as we know, any intimate friendship with a lady able to encourage and understand him—such a friendship, I mean, as that which subsisted between the younger Ampère and Madame Récamier. It is probable, however, that female influence of an elevating kind is of far greater value to a writer than it could ever be to a painter. The benefit of it is to stimulate the faculties by a constant interchange of thought, and so to refine a man's thinking on the subjects which occupy his mind before he attempts to give them a direct literary expression; so that, when he comes to write, his ideas have already had the benefit of friendly discussion with an intellect equal in rank, perhaps, to his own, but having different perceptions, being of another sex. One of the best known instances of this benefit to a writer is the case of John Stuart Mill, who so warmly and candidly acknowledged it. But now let us try to imagine how a similar feminine influence could operate upon the producing faculties of a painter. Clearly as we see how Shelley or Mill may have gained by it, we can only obscurely perceive any possible benefit to the work of a painter like Turner from previous friendly discussion

with any lady, however cultivated. A painter's intentions cannot be discussed until they are already in great part realised,—we can criticise the finished picture, we cannot criticise the intended picture, because we cannot foresee the relative importance which its parts will have when the whole work is finished. The criticism of unfinished works is often so little applicable, that instead of helping the artist it only irritates him. The colouring of a picture in its early stages is often not merely different from what it is intended to be ultimately, but just the opposite, because a colour is prevented from looking crude when painted upon its complementary. The only real help which a painter gains whilst a work is in progress is from his brother-artists, and even they are very likely to misunderstand his purposes. An eminent contemporary, who greatly enjoyed and valued the society of ladies, and lived in it willingly during his hours of leisure, absolutely excluded them from his painting-room, even those of his own household. The only use of feminine influence to a painter is a general effect upon his mind—a refining effect, if the lady is more refined than the artist with whom she lives. But who in the world, masculine or feminine, had ever more refined perception of landscape beauty than Turner had? Could any refinement of feminine perception have added to *his* refinement? No ; the gain which he might have derived from marriage might have been an infinite gain to himself in many ways, but it is not likely that it would have been a gain to his art. It is highly improbable that he would have painted better if married, and it is possible that the cares of a family might have pre-

vented him from executing those important works which the public did not encourage, but which are now the very corner-stones of the great edifice of his fame.

After his first attachment, and the bitterness of disappointment which succeeded to it, Turner became two men in one. There is nothing very unusual in a duality of this kind, for many men find it a convenience to separate themselves from themselves, and be at one time the man of business, or the official, and at another the private gentleman untrammelled by business or officialism. What is striking, however, in the case of Turner, is the very strong contrast between the two natures which dwelt together in him, and which were alike just as much his own as two houses belonging to the same proprietor, and used for alternate habitation. We have plain proof in his works that his artist-nature was one of ineffably exquisite refinement. It has been said of him that his mind was as nearly as possible like those of Keats and Dante intermingled: in such a comparison one might feel inclined to substitute Shelley for Keats, but it may be quite safely asserted, that only amongst the most ethereal poets can we find a spirit of such delicacy as his. At the same time he had another nature, which was something between those of a common sailor and a costermonger: by which I mean, that he was externally coarse, and had an appetite for low pleasures, with a passion for small gains. The poet's nature did not raise or refine the other, nor did the other perceptibly degrade that of the poet. The combination was not a mixture, and the central self of personality, the conscious *Ego*, whatever that may be, passed from

one to the other quite easily down to the very close of life; as a pedestrian may take the road or the footpath at will when both run parallel along the whole course of his journey. The mystery of this is beyond all possible explanation; our nature is not sufficiently understood by us for such things to be clear except as simple facts. A character like Turner's would be rejected at once, in fiction, as untrue, but as a real existence it is undeniable. We shall have to recur to this subject towards the close of our biography, for the present we leave it and continue the story of the Life.

It is possible even, that if Turner had been pressed hard by the necessities of providing for a family he might have remained a drawing-master, for he had some success in that capacity in early life, and was fairly well paid for his lessons to amateurs and in schools. Little is known of his methods of instruction, but we may presume that at the early age of twenty-one he would teach more explicitly, and more graciously, than on the few occasions in mature life when he conveyed any practical instruction to others. It is evident that the kind of art he practised in early life was much more traditional and communicable than the extraordinary and unprecedented manner which expressed the fulness of his genius. When a young man, he did little more than repeat what had been done before by other topographical draughtsmen, applying a traditional method to new subjects; and as the method had been taught to him, so it might be to others after him. But he was not one of those artists who are fitted by nature to make teaching the business of their whole lives. Although, at a later

period, he became Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy, and took great pains to fulfil the duties of his office, he was not gifted for a professor's work. Art is always difficult to explain, and Turner had not the kind of intellect which analyses things in such a way as to be favourable to clear expression in words; nor had he, at any time, that command of language which is necessary to lucid exposition. Besides this difficulty, which was a part of his very peculiar idiosyncrasy, it happened with Turner, as it has happened with many other artists, that as soon as he began to feel his own power his art became nothing but a series of experiments, often very audacious, which it would have been injudicious to communicate to pupils, even if it had been possible. Hence, although he began his career as a teacher, and seems, from the increase of his charges, to have succeeded well in that profession in early life, we learn without surprise that he did not retain his hold upon it, and that more communicative teachers were preferred by the ladies and gentlemen of his time. The absorption in his own art unfitted him more and more for the business of the drawing-master.

CHAPTER III.

Turner comes of age.—First northern tour.—Dr. Whitaker.—Turner elected A.R.A.—His Diploma Picture.—New and Old Gothic.—Professional position in 1800.

IN 1796, when Turner was twenty-one years old, he went to live in rooms of his own in the lane at the end of Hand Court, for quietness. He exhibited much this year, including subjects from Salisbury, Westminster, Staffordshire, Wales, the Isle of Wight, and the sea. From this time it becomes more difficult to know with certainty from his exhibited works where he had been the year previous, because he has already begun to accumulate memoranda, and makes use of his earliest stores. Thus, in 1796 he exhibits drawings of Salisbury and Ely Cathedrals, and of fishermen at sea; and the next year he exhibits other drawings of the same cathedrals, and another drawing of fishermen. This may have been merely a recurrence to material already accumulated, but on the other hand, when we meet with some place in his drawings which he has not previously illustrated, we may conclude that in all probability he had visited it the year before. Up to the exhibition of 1798 he shows nothing from Yorkshire, but in that year he has several Yorkshire subjects; therefore we may

conclude that he first visited that county, afterwards so great a favourite of his, in the year 1797. In that year he exhibited the little picture called *Moonlight, a study at Millbank,* which is now in the National Gallery, and is interesting as being the first of his works in oil which were exhibited at the Royal Academy. The picture is dull and heavy, and shows not the least trace of genius, yet it has always been rather a favourite with the writer of this biography for its truth to nature in one thing. All the ordinary manufacturers of moonlights—and moonlights have been manufactured in deplorably large quantities for the market—represent the light of our satellite as a blue and cold light, whereas in nature, especially in the southern summer, it is often pleasantly rich and warm. Turner did not follow the usual receipt, but had the courage to make his moonlight warm, though he had not as yet the skill to express the ineffably mellow softness of the real warm moonlights in nature.

The year 1797 must have been one of the happiest of Turner's early life. For the first time he got fairly into the north of England, and became acquainted with a kind of scenery which he loved for ever after. The catholicity of his taste in the choice of subject was already one of the marked characteristics of his mind; yet although he could find something to interest him anywhere, he found in Yorkshire, in the closest proximity to each other, those elements of interest which are often so widely apart that even the audacity of an artist cannot venture to bring them together. In the Highlands of Scotland we have mountains but no architecture; in Lin-

colnshire architecture but no mountains; whilst through all the lovely reaches of the Thames you may seek in vain amongst its richest meadows for monastic remains like those of Fountains, Rivaulx, Kirkstall, or Bolton. There are castles on the southern coast, but where on the chalk cliffs will you find another Whitby? There are hills in Surrey, but what are the little southern heaths in comparison with the bleak vastness of a Yorkshire moor, where no sound is to be heard but the whistling of the wind and the whirr of the heath-cock's wings? In the close proximity of quite different material, the hilly parts of Yorkshire are a paradise to an artist of such various taste as Turner's. In an hour's walk he may pass there from the fertility of Arabia Felix to the stony desolation of Arabia Petræa; the hills are lofty enough to give him some foretaste of Highland sublimities, and the vales are rich enough to remind him of the old pastorals, if his feelings are still attached to them by the ties of artistic tradition.

But not only did Turner visit Yorkshire in 1797. The taste for travel was already too strong in him to be satisfied without seeing everything within his reach; so as he thought that the English lakes and the extreme north of England were not very far out of his way, he determined to see these also, and penetrated into Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Northumberland. The results of this excursion are partly visible in the next Academy Exhibition, to which the young artist sends monastic ruins and valleys of Yorkshire, mountains and lakes from Cumberland and Westmoreland, and baronial castles from Northumberland, still standing by

sea or river. In the same year, as if to show that his interest in quiet southern scenes had not been diminished by any new-born enthusiasm for the sublimities of the north, he sends to the Academy *A Study in September of the Fern-House, Mr. Lock's Park, Mickleham, Surrey.* Castles and abbeys he has seen in all their grandeur, yet still thinks that the fern-house in Mr. Lock's park is worth drawing and exhibiting also. This is most characteristic of Turner, and we shall find him throughout his career always ready to turn from great things to little things, his power of taking an interest in what he saw being always active, and neither deadened by too much stimulus nor atrophied by the insufficiency of it.

The year 1798 is not so rich in engravings from Turner's works as others before and after it. In that year the plates of Sheffield and Wakefield appeared in the 'Itinerant,' two towns which were less unpicturesque then than now. Both of them have good scenery very near at hand, but they have been spoiled for the painter by their very prosperity during the last seventy-five years. It was part of Turner's professional business at that time to illustrate towns, and he had done a good deal in that line, no doubt very conscientiously, but his tastes were already too exclusive for him to settle down to a regular trade of that kind. In 1799 the list of his exhibited works includes subjects from Wales and Northumberland, as well as two from Salisbury, which he often recurred to in early life; but this year he is ambitious, and paints a marine picture of the Battle of the Nile, mentioned in the catalogue with a quotation from 'Paradise Lost,' that well-known passage where the

angels turn artillerymen, which is usually considered one of the blemishes of the poem. Turner seems to have been reading Milton at that time, for he quotes him again, *àpropos* of Harlech Castle, an evening drawing of which is one of his contributions to the Academy. The year before he quoted chiefly from Thomson's 'Seasons;' this year he quotes them once, *àpropos* of Warkworth Castle, Northumberland. It may be observed in this place that Turner's fancy for quoting poetry varied greatly in different years. One year he would quote rather extensively, and at another not at all. For example, in 1799 he enriches the Academy Catalogue with no less than thirty-seven lines of poetry from various authors, but in 1801 he does not quote a syllable. At a later period he makes the fatal discovery that a painter may compose his own bits of poetry and quote himself, but of this peculiar development of the Turnerian genius we shall have more to say in due time.

In 1799 Turner began the series of nine annual illustrations to the 'Oxford Almanac,' and it is probably in this year that he made the acquaintance of Dr. Whitaker, author of the 'History of Whalley.' Although Dr. Whitaker's name is perfectly well known in the north of England, and to readers in other parts of the island who take an interest in the history and antiquities of Lancashire and Yorkshire, we may explain for others who have not been led to any special study of those counties, that the learned Doctor had a strong interest in the localities which he knew best, which, happily for posterity, led him to write three of the best local histories which have ever proceeded from the affectionate industry

of an archæologist. These three histories had for their subjects the parish of Whalley, the district of Craven, and a part of Yorkshire about Richmond, known to local antiquarians as Richmondshire. Dr. Whitaker was Vicar of Whalley at the time that he wrote the history of that remarkably extensive and interesting parish, and it so happens that his son, who is now about to publish a new edition of the work, is also Vicar of Whalley, and to him I am indebted for a few details about Turner. He believes, but is not certain, that the young painter's first introduction to Dr. Whitaker was through Mr. Edwards, the Halifax publisher, when the Doctor was approaching the close of his labours as the historian of Whalley. Turner's new patron employed him to make designs for several of the plates which were to illustrate his work; and the young artist executed his task conscientiously, but with so little talent of any obviously visible kind, that Dr. Whitaker's fidelity to him, in subsequently commissioning the drawings for the 'History of Richmondshire,' has always seemed to me remarkable as an evidence of his perspicacity. Few who had known Turner from such illustrations as his *Whalley Abbey*, *Clitheroe*, and *Browsholme*, would have entertained the slightest hope that he could ever produce such designs as those in the 'History of Richmondshire;' but it is possible that Dr. Whitaker may have watched Turner's development in other publications. Between the 'Whalley' and 'Richmondshire' appeared Dr. Whitaker's 'History of Craven,' and to this Turner contributed an architectural subject. His connection with these historical works was of use to him, by making him more

intimately acquainted with places and people in a very interesting part of the north of England. The old mansion of the Whitakers, the Holme (familiar to the present biographer from his infancy), is situated in one of the most beautiful scenes of Lancashire which still remain unspoiled by the manufactures. Near Burnley the vale is broad, and is occupied by the noble demesne of Towneley, which sweeps up the great waves of land before and behind the Hall, and fills all the hollow between them with rich meadows and a park full of sylvan beauty; but as you go from Towneley to the Holme the valley rapidly narrows, till at last it becomes a gorge or defile, with bold steep slopes which end in rugged cliffs of perpendicular rock, as high as the sea-cliffs on the wild Yorkshire coast. On each side of the glen there are gullies or ravines formed by the watercourses, and at the foot of one of thse ravines stands the old house yet, much altered and enriched, but still preserving its main features. It is just one of those regions which Turner would have illustrated nobly in his maturity.

With his usual wonderful good luck, our hero was elected Associate of the Royal Academy at the early age of twenty-four. A landscape-painter in the present day, aged twenty-four, and able to do just what Turner could do then—that is, to paint his diploma picture of *Dolbadern Castle, North Wales*—might possibly, no doubt, be elected Associate; but the chances are so much against him that he would be just as likely to be made a Knight of the Garter. The competitors of Turner were much weaker, no doubt, than the competitors of a young aspirant in the present day, so that victory was

easier for him; but the best part of his luck consisted in this, that in 1800 the Academy had not yet become an exclusive club of figure-painters, so that landscape had a fair chance of recognition. In the present day almost all the Academicians and Associates are figure-painters, and their almost invariable custom is to elect men who follow their own branch of the profession. There is no written rule against the election of a landscape-painter, and at exceedingly rare, and ever rarer intervals, a landscape-painter of extraordinary merit, in his full maturity, is made an Associate, in order to prove that the Academy is not absolutely intolerant of such artists. But in our day a landscape-painter has not the faintest chance of being elected an A.R.A. to encourage him and help him whilst the difficulties of his career loom still like mountainous steeps before him. It was in this that Turner was so fortunate. The right to a good and secure place on the Academy walls was given to him when he was striving hard with all the energy of youth; the Associateship came like a fair wind to a little boat that is fighting against the tide, and not like a breeze to a ship in port.

The subject of Turner's diploma picture was Dolbadern Castle, in North Wales. The castle is a simple round tower by the shore of the smaller of the two lakes of Llanberis, and within a short walk of Llanberis itself, at the foot of Snowdon. Very likely many readers of these pages may have seen the little castle, and sketched it, for it is rather a popular subject for a sketch. Those who know the place will remember its marked and peculiar geological character (blue slate), which no landscape-painter

before our generation would have recognised. One of the most curious things in the history of landscape-painting is the persistence with which the artists, and the public who admired them, remained blind to the facts of the earth's structure, even to the visible, obvious, most striking and external facts, until there was a definite science of geology, with a scientific nomenclature. Turner's *Dolbadern* is merely a brown picture of the Wilson class, with some feeling for the sublimity of an isolated tower amidst mountain scenery, but no delight in, nor observation of, the especial character of landscape round Llanberis. It would indeed, in the last years of the eighteenth century, have been a proof of almost unimaginable audacity in a young artist to venture to paint blue slate. Wilson, whose name so naturally suggests itself to us in connection with Llanberis, which is near the little estate that saved him from utter indigence at last, never ventured to paint the real scenery of Wales, though he loved it, and drew some consolation from the solemnity of it at the close of life. It might almost be supposed that the painters of those days foresaw the artistic difficulties and dangers which were likely to be, and which in fact have been, opened like pitfalls to imprudent artists by the free access to the whole of nature which is claimed by the modern spirit. Turner, at Dolbadern, was still in the spirit of the elder artists, to whom art seemed much more distinct from nature than it seems now to their successors. They looked upon the painted world on canvas as a world in itself, and they were cautious about introducing into the painted world the material of the dangerously various reality. It may have been a result

of this early caution in accepting nature as good material for art, that Turner, to the end of his days, considered art and nature as two entirely distinct things, or categories of things, in which he differed from the modern English realists who succeeded him, and whose main purpose was, in the most literal sense, to hold the mirror up to nature.

About this time Turner's name becomes associated with that of the famous author of 'Vathek;' for he went to Fonthill in 1799, and made several sketches of the *Gothic Abbey* there, which Mr. Beckford was then building, and in which (as Scott did afterwards at Abbotsford) he made the perilous experiment of a romance in stone and lime. Beckford's stone romance included the wonderful tower, of which the impossible ideal, with eleven thousand stairs, existed already in his story of 'Vathek;' but the tower fell down long ago, and the Fonthill collections are dispersed, and the fame of Beckford's heap of gold has faded before the lustre of bigger heaps which have been accumulated since his time. So passes the glory of the world! But when 'England's wealthiest son' was building his tower by sunlight and by torchlight, gangs of workmen succeeding each other without intermission—for there were no genii to add nightly cubits to this edifice in the region of reality—the young artist who quietly looked on was himself laying the foundations of a more durable monument.

The year after his visit to Fonthill, Turner studied Gothic of a more authentic character at York, a better place for an artist at the beginning of this century than

(thanks to the improvements of Philistine corporations) it has since become. There he sketched the noble Minster, which Etty afterwards loved more passionately than ever building was loved before; and before leaving Yorkshire he sketched both Kirkstall and Bolton, which he made good use of afterwards when his powers as an artist were much more fully developed. Kirkstall is in these days better in a drawing than in the reality, for the modern industrial life of Leeds has come so very near it that the visitor cannot exclude it and get back to the tranquil old monastic life without an effort of the imagination of which few visitors are capable. Even in Turner's day the modern world could not be entirely excluded from the scene, though he acknowledged its presence only by a single building on the other side of the weir, carefully screened by massive trunks of trees. Bolton Abbey is still so preserved from the too immediate contact of manufacturing modernism that it is yet possible to dream there of the past, though even Bolton itself is now dangerously near to the factories, and you may reach them from the inn there in a disquietingly short time on horseback. Turner had ever afterwards the most intense affection for Bolton Abbey and its neighbourhood, and for the river Wharfe, which flows through the sweet meadows in the vale and makes a beautiful curve round the site of the Abbey itself. Who that has once followed the Wharfe from the narrow glen below Barden Tower, past the Strid, the Abbey, and the bridge, and down for a few miles till it becomes broad and sleepy above the weir at Burley, can wonder that an artist like Turner should have loved it? In

later life all that land became consecrated for him by one of the most affectionate friendships that ever cheered the solitude of a bachelor's existence. Farnley Hall is near the Wharfe, and Mr. Fawkes of Farnley made Turner so happy there that the place was dearer than home to him. He was a hard worker, and, like all hard workers, capable of thoroughly forgetting work and heartily amusing himself. His favourite recreation was fishing. The Wharfe is a very good stream for the angler between Bolton Abbey and Farnley Hall; so that Turner may have had an angler's attachment for it as well as a painter's. Besides the Wharfe, and the sweet vale in which Bolton Priory lies nestling, there was a strong attraction for a Londoner in the hills whence the young stream flows. There are many bold hills in Yorkshire, but few strike the eye and awaken the imagination more than the heights about Barden Tower, because their wildness is such a contrast after the rich peace of the sacred vale. All Turner's drawings of that land show how strongly its hill-forms affected him. See the *Bolton Abbey* in Rogers, for example, and the other illustration to 'The Boy of Egremond,' the *Strid*, in which the steepness of the hills is well remembered, whilst the true character of the stream at that place is neglected or forgotten.

We may take note at this time of one or two changes of London residence. The reader may remember that in 1796, when Turner was twenty-one years old, he went to live in rooms of his own at the end of Hand Court, Maiden Lane. In 1800 he went to live in Harley Street, and either in that year or the next, for there are different

accounts of this removal, he removed to 75, Norton Street, Fitzroy Square. His flittings appear to have been the consequences of professional promotion. At every decided step in advance he took a different habitation. This is rather curious, indicating, as it does, how entirely he lived in his professional life.

It is not very easy for us, at this distance of time, to realise to ourselves quite accurately the professional position of Turner in 1800, for either we are likely to overrate it (from the power of his name upon us now), or else we may even under-estimate it from the contrast between the sort of work that he did then and the wonderful performance of his full maturity. Another difficulty is that there is not a single artist now living in England, or in Europe, who occupies exactly the same position which Turner occupied at the very beginning of this century. He was not yet considered a great artist, and did not deserve to be so considered; but on the other hand, he was looked upon as the best man for a certain class of illustrative work which was in demand, and in much greater demand than it is now. The English form of the spirit of the classical Renaissance was just giving way to that first interest in the work of the middle ages which found its literary expression, later, in the romances of Sir Walter Scott, and so strongly coloured what is distinctively the literature of the nineteenth century, that it is scarcely possible to find an English author living in it, from Byron downwards, whose works are not tinged, at least in parts, with the light of the mediæval Renaissance. Turner was not naturally a mediævalist; his modes of thought, and his

early training, led him rather to the kind of classicism which has prevailed in the education of modern painters. These artists have been much withdrawn from mediæval influence by a very simple and intelligible cause. The mediæval artists could invent noble architecture and beautiful decoration, but they could not draw the figure. Painters went necessarily and inevitably to those predecessors who understood the human form. The Greeks understood it; even the Romans understood it also; the whole of what we call the classical world understood it, and the whole of what we call the mediæval world remained in ignorance of it. For this reason the culture and tradition of modern art are a classical culture and tradition. It may still be doubted whether Turner, had he been left to follow his own instincts without reference to the demands of publishers or purchasers, would ever have painted Gothic architecture at all. Amongst the pictures which he consciously intended to be his great masterpieces, and which he undertook without reference to the immediate demand, Gothic architecture does not occur, whilst classical architecture is of frequent occurrence. But although Turner's tastes or instincts did not lead him directly to Gothic architecture, he was brought to it indirectly by his love of English landscape, and his generally comprehensive interest in human work of all kinds. When he sat down to sketch a scene with an ordinary house in it, he would not omit the house; he never omitted anything that had human interest; much less, then, would he omit an object so full of human interest as a Gothic castle or abbey. He drew such mediæval remains in a painstaking and prosaic way at

the beginning (as at Whalley, for example), but as he improved in the knowledge and treatment of landscape he perceived more clearly how much might be done with Gothic architecture as picturesque material, and he drew it better, in combination with the surrounding landscape, than any other artist of his time. In this way he came to have a safe little professional speciality. Whenever a publisher wanted a good drawing of an English abbey, or castle, or cathedral, he knew that young Mr. Turner would do it for him in a satisfactory way, with all its landscape or street surroundings. But whilst Turner could draw mediæval architecture, he was not a mediævalist. He would study a 'gentleman's seat' with as much complacency, and as faithful care, as Salisbury Cathedral or Fountains Abbey. He had none of those intense repugnances which prevent many young artists from earning their living, but would draw anything that came in his way. This comprehensiveness, or tolerance, gave him a safe position in the pecuniary sense, though his earnings were not great; and we have seen that on the artistic side his qualities, though far from brilliant as yet, were sufficiently visible to procure him regular admission to the Academy exhibition, and to get him elected Associate at a remarkably early age. We have not in these days any young artists in Turner's position, because his trade of drawing mediæval buildings has been almost annihilated by photography. Yet it was the engravings from these drawings which first made Turner known, and which kept him safe from want at a time when his pictures were not saleable. In 1800 his name was already strong enough for a publisher to ven-

ture upon *separate* engravings from his works. The first were the *Mausoleum at Brocklesby*, and *Dunster Castle* from the south-west. From that date single plates appeared at intervals till his death, and after it. In the present day the print-publisher would not invest capital in laboured engravings from the works of a landscape-painter such as Turner was in his early manhood. The pictures which the print-sellers of these days cause to be engraved are almost exclusively incident pictures, or pictures which appeal to deep-seated national sentiments of loyalty or religion.

In the year 1800 Turner seems to have thought it necessary, as an Associate of the Academy, to send something of a higher character than usual to its exhibition, so he exhibited *The Fifth Plague of Egypt*, a tiresome brown picture of a class which would soon become intolerable if we were compelled to see many of them. The other works exhibited by him that year were all from Fonthill, except a view of Caernarvon Castle. About this time in his life Turner seems to have thought it necessary to send one ambitious Biblical picture to each exhibition, for in 1801 he attempts no less a subject than *The Army of the Medes destroyed in the Desert by a Whirlwind* (from Jeremiah), and in 1802 he paints *The Tenth Plague of Egypt.*

CHAPTER IV.

Kilchurn Castle. — Topography. — Turner's dream pictures. — The topography of poets.

IT was probably in the year 1801, Turner being then twenty-six years old, that he went to Scotland for the first time in his life; saw Edinburgh, the Falls of Clyde, and Loch Lomond, and penetrated into the Western Highlands, where he made a study of Kilchurn Castle and the mountains at the head of Loch Awe. The picture of *Kilchurn* was exhibited in 1802, and enhanced the artist's reputation; its chief interest for us just at present is, that it marks more definitively than any other work of that time his complete deliverance from topography, and his artistic independence of the fact. *Dolbadern* is inaccurate also, but it is so in quite a different way. In the *Dolbadern* the artist works traditionally, and has the elder landscape-painters in his mind all the time that he is painting, but in the *Kilchurn* he is absolutely delivered from tradition. He is delivered at the same time, and quite as absolutely, from the topographic slavery of his youth. The *Kilchurn* is neither an imitation of Wilson nor a copy of the actual scene in nature. It is a Turner, and nothing but a Turner.

There is no scene in Europe more familiar to me than

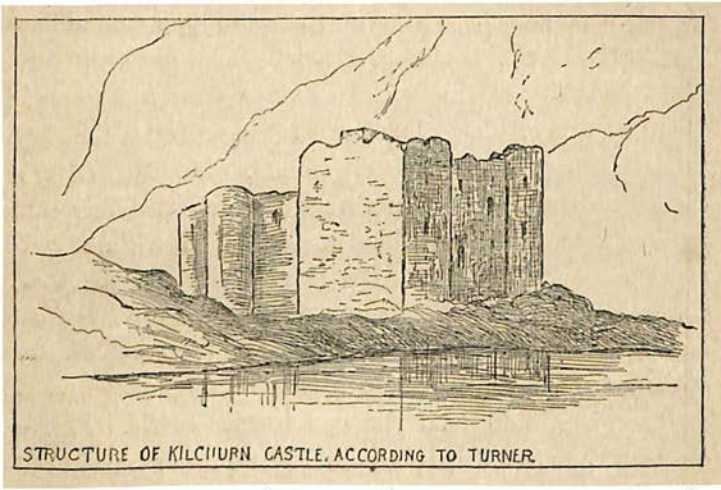
the head of Loch Awe, where Kilchurn Castle is situated. I have lived there for years, and know the topography of the place quite thoroughly, with that minuteness which is only possible to a resident who takes the keenest interest in the neighbourhood where he lives, and makes landscape-painting his main occupation, and walking and boating his amusements. This close intimacy with the place permits me to appreciate the exact degree in which Turner's topography is a deviation from the topography of the actual world; and the reader will perhaps think it not too great a demand upon his patience if I make the difference as clear as I can in this instance, for it is of the very utmost importance to our understanding of Turner's mature work, occurring as it does quite early in his manhood, and fixing the date of his emancipation from reality. Turner's view of Kilchurn is taken from the shore of the river Orchay, at a little distance above the castle, and it includes as material, 1st, the river, with its right and left banks; 2nd, Kilchurn Castle; 3rd, a glimpse of the lake; 4th, a great mass of mountain, which Turner calls the Cruachan Ben Mountains; 5th, a mountainous distance. We will examine these parts of the composition one after another.

1. *The River.*—The Orchay flows past Dalmally till it comes to within a short distance of Kilchurn; but it does not go directly to the castle, it leaves Kilchurn on the left and falls into Loch Awe above it. The Orchay, when it gets into the neighbourhood of Kilchurn, finds itself in a genuine alluvial plain, not of great extent, yet having all the characteristics of such a plain. The reader who understands the action of rivers guesses at

once that in such a place the level of the water will be two or three yards lower than that of the land, and that on one side at least the bank will be perpendicular, and more or less undermined by the water. In the Orchay it so happens that the steep cutting is on the Kilchurn side, where the river comes within sight of the castle. This expression, 'within sight,' is somewhat inaccurate; for when you are in a boat on the river you cannot see the castle at all, at the spot from which (according to the perspective of the walls) Turner's view must necessarily be taken. He, therefore, entirely altered the character of the river and foreground. He ignored the existence of the flat plain through which the river cuts its way, and gave wavy land instead of it, without any steeply-cut banks at all. By this sacrifice (a sacrifice, please observe, not of some unimportant fact, but of essential local character) he made the river artistically *manageable*, which in nature it is not, and he contrived so that it should lead the eye to the castle. Before quitting the river, I may observe that Turner introduced three boats, that the boats are managed by Highlanders in kilts, and that two out of the three have sails. Now, of course I cannot prove that no sails were used on Loch Awe in Turner's day, but I do not believe that he ever saw one there. When I lived there, nothing astonished me so much as the entire absence of any nautical instinct or knowledge in the inhabitants. The oldest men told me that no one ever used a sail on Loch Awe, because of the violent gusts of wind, and I believe that this extreme caution had come down to the people from their ancestors. The simple explanation of

the sails in Turner's picture is, that he wanted them to cut the base-line of his mountain, and throw the mountain further back.

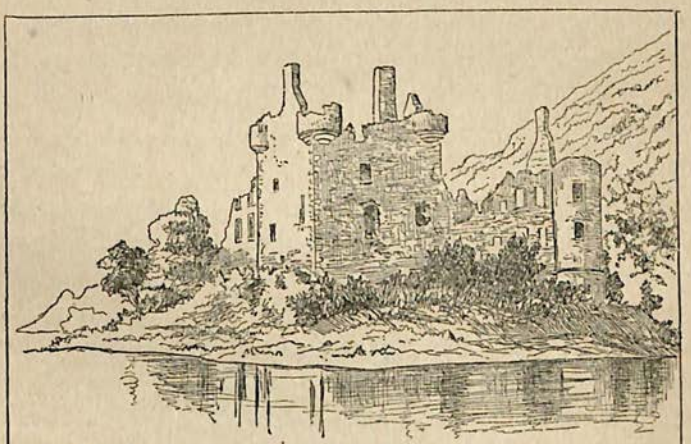
2. *The Castle.*—Turner's alterations in the castle seem more difficult to explain than those in the structure of the earth. Turner's Kilchurn is not the real Kilchurn at all; and the difference between them seems much more



STRUCTURE OF KILCHURN CASTLE, ACCORDING TO TURNER.

due to simple carelessness than to any artistic craft. The castle in the picture is certainly a much clumsier and less interesting object than it is in the reality. Few of the Highland castles have any architectural interest; but Kilchurn is one of the best of them, owing to the happy disposition of its principal and minor masses. There is a square keep, to begin with, at the east angle (the angle nearest to the spectator in Turner's picture), with round corner turrets, resting on well-moulded corbels. Turner simply ignores the separate existence of this keep, and merges it in the general

mass of the castle. As to the corbel-turrets, he omits them altogether, though he must have been aware of their importance to architectural character. At the northern angle of the real castle there is a small round tower, or turret, like the *tourelles* so common in French châteaux. This was never as high as the keep, nor even as the chimneys. Turner omits it altogether, or supposes it, like the keep, merged in the common mass, and as



STRUCTURE OF KILCHURN CASTLE, THE REALITY

high as the keep itself. A very important characteristic of the Scottish castle and French château is the relative importance of their chimneys. At Kilchurn there are several chimneys still in good preservation, four of them being very conspicuous, and three out of the four are striking objects from the point of view chosen by Turner; yet he gives nothing recognisable as a chimney in all his building. To the left hand the artist draws a lower or minor mass of building, and inserts a semi-circular projection in the middle of it, like the semi-circular

towers in Roman city walls. There is nothing of this kind in the reality. A very important picturesque characteristic of Kilchurn Castle is the magnificent abundance of ivy on the side of the ruins towards the lake. A great mass of this is visible from the place where Turner sketched, on the left-hand corner of the building. There is no ivy whatever on Turner's Kilchurn. It may be objected that the ivy has grown since then, but the thickness of its trunks, which are colossal, is evidence of its great age. The reader will please to observe, that in these deviations from the truth the artist has in every instance sacrificed not only fact but character. Not only does his castle fail to recall such details as the placing of the windows—though even this affects character, for the *regularity* of the windows in Kilchurn, which Turner has neglected, is an important architectural characteristic—not only does the artist omit little details, but he *utterly despises the most important features of the building*, its great keep, its minor towers, its turrets, and its chimneys. He is supposed, indeed, to have drawn a certain building, but he draws it in such a manner as to mark his complete indifference to everything in it that is interesting, either from the picturesque point of view or the architectural.

3. *The Mountain.*—It is not so easy to fix upon points of comparison between a mountain drawing and the reality, as it is to criticise a drawing of architecture; but there are certain features which can be fixed upon even in a mountain. I may begin by saying quite plainly, that from the point of view chosen by Turner, a point of view definitively fixed for us by the perspective of the

castle walls (it is lucky that we have this *pour nous orienter*), there is no mountain to be seen bearing the most distant resemblance to that which he gives us. That side of Loch Awe is separated from Loch Etive by a chain of mountains terminating in Ben Cruachan. You have Ben Cruachan, with its base in the Pass of Brandir, then Ben Vorich, then Ben Anea, and after that the mountains of Glen Strae.* With these last we have nothing to do now because Turner has his back to them. A man drawing Kilchurn from Turner's place can see Ben Anea easily by turning his head to the right. The mountain before him, on the other side Kilchurn Castle, is not Ben Cruachan but Ben Vorich. As for Cruachan, he is completely hidden behind Vorich, and as much invisible as if he were in Greenland. The latter, then, is the mountain (in nature) that we have to deal with now.

Ben Vorich, as seen behind Kilchurn, slopes towards the lake at an angle of thirty degrees near the water, and of twenty degrees higher up the slope. It has no peak. It is richly wooded up to a height of about one thousand feet.

Turner's mountain slopes towards the lake at an angle of seventy degrees near the water, and at an average angle of thirty degrees higher up. It has a peak. It is not wooded at all.

* With regard to this bit of geography the reader is respectfully requested not to go by the maps, unless he has the Ordnance Survey. The other maps generally give the right situations of Scottish towns and villages, but are utterly untrustworthy as to the physical geography of the country. I have never seen a map of Scotland which put the mountains in their right places, or which gave an accurate shore-line of the lakes. Ben Vorich is not to be confounded with Ben Voirlich.

Ben Vorich does not, from that point, present a very broken outline. It has some variety in it, but it is not much broken.

The outline of Turner's mountain is wild and rugged in the extreme, from the peak down to the precipice.

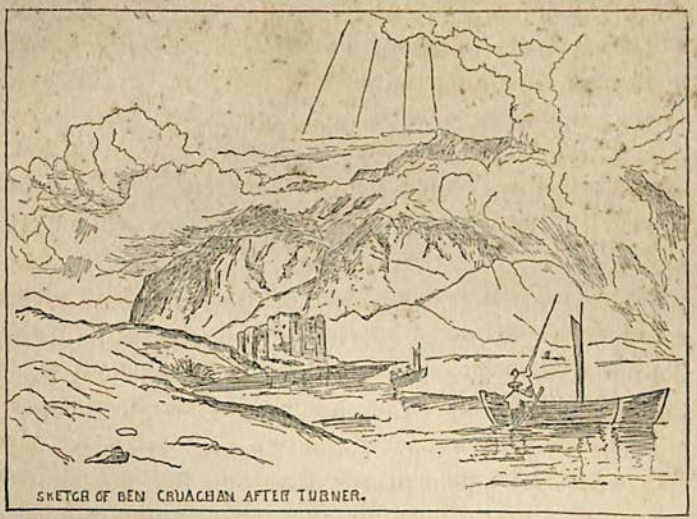
The conclusion to which this comparison forces us is that Turner substituted some other mountain for that which is really visible behind Kilchurn. If he drew anything in nature, we may have to go some distance to seek it.

There are only two mountains near Loch Awe which could have offered even a distant suggestion of the Turner mountain. One is Ben Anea, which from a certain place on the Orchay appears by an effect of perspective to have a sort of pretension to a peak; but Ben Anea is hemmed in by other mountains, and does not descend precipitously to the lake. Turner's mountain is precipitous, and clear of others on the left-hand side. Ben Cruachan has a real peak, and is isolated just on that side. I conclude, therefore, that the mountain in Turner's picture is suggested by Ben Cruachan.

Now, the nearest place from which the peak of Ben Cruachan ceases to be eclipsed by the head of Ben Vorich is nearly three miles from Kilchurn by water, and a good deal further by land. Turner must, therefore, have combined sketches taken at a distance of three miles from each other in one picture.

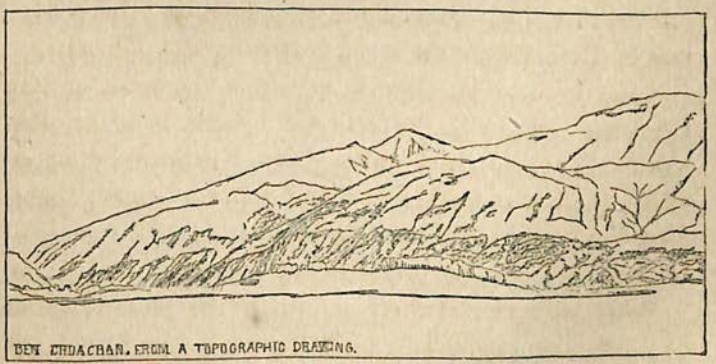
When we arrive at the place where the peak is about as much disengaged as it is in Turner's picture, we get a view of Ben Cruachan, which has indeed some very slight and distant resemblance to Turner's mountain;

but we observe that the artist has no more cared to preserve even the character of the mountain than he did



SKETCH OF BEN CRUACHAN AFTER TURNER.

that of the castle. The real Ben Cruachan is not very rugged, except just about the summit, and even there



BEN CRUACHAN. FROM A TOPOGRAPHIC DRAWING.

the ruggedness of it is much reduced by distance. There are a few humps, or bosses, on its side, it is true,

but by far the most characteristic feature is the vast curving slope from the shoulder down to the loch. The average inclination of this is not so great as might be imagined, for it does not exceed twenty degrees. It was neither striking enough nor entertaining enough to suit Turner, who broke it up into ruggedness above, and finished it with a sheer precipice below. In the reality you cannot see Ben Cruachan from this point without seeing Ben Vorich also, and the latter interferes considerably with his greater neighbour. Turner ignores Ben Vorich altogether, giving him no separate individuality, though some of the mountainous masses to the right may be supposed, by our charity, to belong to him. The reader will see from my topographical drawing, that the mass of Ben Vorich makes the peak of Cruachan look insignificant.

We may observe, lastly, that although the real Cruachan is wooded up to a certain height, say from 300 to 1000 feet, Turner's mountain is not wooded at all.

4. *The Remote Distance.*—It is difficult, of course, with an artist who takes his materials wherever he likes, to fix upon mountain outlines in nature and say that he meant to draw those more than any others; but if Cruachan affords any indication, these distant hills must be the moorland on and about Craiganunie. I need hardly observe that they are pure invention. Craiganunie does not, from any point of view, take those outlines, nor outlines of that character.

In order to make this distance visible from his point of view near Kilchurn, Turner has entirely removed some wooded land which would have hidden it. Never-

theless that wooded land is very good for artists, with its grand old Scotch firs and its rocky foregrounds, and it is one of the most characteristic parts of the immediate neighbourhood of Kilchurn.

If the reader has had the patience to follow me attentively through this analysis he will at least be quite convinced of one thing, that so early as 1802, when Turner was only twenty-seven years old, he had already absolutely abandoned everything of the nature of topographic fidelity. The difference between his treatment of landscape and faithful portraiture is not the difference between one kind of topography and another; it is the difference between a certain kind of truthfulness and the total abandonment of that particular kind of truthfulness. It is as if a writer of travels were to say to himself, 'Hitherto I have endeavoured to tell the truth about the places which I have seen, but from this day forwards, although remaining an honourable person in the ordinary intercourse of life, I shall consider myself, whenever I sit down to write my travels, at perfect liberty to say what is not true, and to omit what is true, just as it may suit my convenience and seem to me likely to astonish, or amuse, or in any way charm or delight, my readers.' Had there been any endeavour, in Turner's case, to preserve some particular kind of local truth—to preserve, for example, the truth of local character merely, whilst abandoning particular facts—the case would have been a change of principle as to truth, but not an abandonment of principle. What Turner really did, however, was not to emancipate himself partially; he emancipated himself entirely; and

after having been in his youth a describer of what he had seen, he became henceforth just as much an author of fiction as a poet in words or a novelist.

The distinction between Turner's treatment of natural material and that of the majority of landscape-painters will better be understood by an example. As we have been talking about Kilchurn, it will be a saving of trouble to the reader if I describe another view of the same place. In the Royal Collection at Osborne there is a picture of it in water-colour by Mr. G. H. Fripp, which was engraved by Mr. Wallis for the *Art Journal*. It appeared in that periodical for February, 1868. The view here is in a different direction, but the treatment of the two artists may be very closely compared. Mr. Fripp's picture includes the castle, the alluvial plain of the Orchay, Ben Anea, and the mountains of Glen Strae. It is not by any means a strictly accurate piece of topography, Mr. Fripp having used his liberty as an artist in various ways, which we will indicate very shortly; but he has been extremely careful to preserve what seemed to him all the most important truths of local character, so that any one who loved the place might find in the picture at least all those features which he would be likely to remember and to recognise. The feelings of attachment to locality, which are often so inextricably mingled with our admiration for natural beauty, are hurt and wounded by Turner's indifference to everything that we know and love; but in Mr. Fripp's work they find a succession of satisfactions. The castle is not minutely accurate; the nearest corbel-turret is omitted, perhaps by the fault of the engraver, but we

find all the principal features—the keep, the gables, the chimneys, the staircase turret, the heavy masses of ivy, the rock on which the castle stands. This is not simply a castle *quelconque;* it is Kilchurn Castle, and no other. In the landscape we have the same degree of fidelity to all the leading features. There is the alluvial plain, with its stunted trees, scattered near the Orchay, but gathering into a little wood behind Kilchurn itself. There is the bay of Kilchurn between us and the castle; and across the lake, to the left, the Goose's Rock which projects into the water, with the trees about it. Mr. Fripp has not omitted the solitary farm-house near the Goose's Rock (see 'Painter's Camp,' p. 105, cheap edition), nor has he forgotten the picturesque rocks and trees on his own side of the lake, but has used them in his foreground. As I wander into Mr. Fripp's distance up Glen Strae, I remember many a real wandering in that region, and feel grateful to the artist for enabling me to live past days over again.

With so much local fidelity, what, then, is the artistic liberty used by Mr. Fripp, of which we spoke a little time since? In what does his manner of treatment differ from the strict topographic truth?

It differs, first, in being more concentrated than the natural scene. Interesting material, on the right hand and on the left, is brought nearer together, so as to get it into the picture. For example, the Goose's Rock, which is interesting, is outside the picture to the left, but it is brought in to add interest. Another alteration is that all the mountains are made higher, and their lines steeper, than in nature: the difference of steepness be-

tween a line in the picture and the same line in nature is from fifteen to twenty degrees. In all probability Mr. Fripp exaggerated height and steepness unconsciously, for artists do so almost invariably in consequence of the vivacity of their own impressions. The truth is, that although the mountains at the head of Loch Awe strike the imagination very powerfully, they are not precipitously steep. The angle of their outline in nature seldom exceeds thirty degrees. In Mr. Fripp's picture it reaches about fifty degrees. Another very decided difference between Mr. Fripp's work and nature is, that he remarkably exaggerates ruggedness. The slopes of Ben Anea are not, in nature, very rugged; on the contrary, that mountain is somewhat remarkable for the fine rounding of its principal parts. Mr. Fripp prefers ruggedness to roundness (thinking it more picturesque) and hews the surface of the mountain into steps and precipices; for which, indeed, there is an excuse in nature, for the rock is often visible, but no more. The other mountains are treated on the same principle. The foreground is true to local character, but is simply used as material, the rocks and trees being put where they suit the artist's convenience.

Such is the exact degree in which Mr. Fripp will deviate from nature in his drawing, and in this degree of deviation he resembles the majority of our more conscientious artists. They alter nature in order to make their work look more pictorial, but they do not, as a general rule, abandon the endeavour to render local character to the best of their ability. There are great differences in their success, and differences in the license

they allow themselves: but the general feeling amongst artists is, that when a picture is called by the name of a place, it ought to bear some resemblance to that place.

One or two of the most earnest young English artists have gone further than this, and attempted genuine portraiture, trying to draw things really and truly as they are. They met with an unforeseen difficulty in the constitution of the human mind. All men when they are struck by anything in nature exaggerate it. I mean, that they see the real thing in nature bigger and more important than it really is. The consequence of this is, that a representation of the thing which only gives the true importance of it relatively to other objects, is at once rejected as inadequate. There is a wide distinction between the really apparent size of objects and the size which we imagine them to appear. The first can be measured scientifically at any time with the utmost accuracy, and precisely stated in terms of degrees and minutes, just as we can measure the exact inclination of a mountain slope; the second is purely a mental impression.* We admit then, and consider it a settled question, that pure topography is not to be expected from an artist, and we will even admit that such deviations as those of Mr. Fripp are lawful; because though he may not care for truth of minute detail, he does evidently care for truth of character, and try to preserve it. But what are we to say of Turner? Is his system,

* The reader is referred to an article on this subject in the *Portfolio* for 1875, page 76. The reasons for the inadequacy of pure topography have also been explained in my 'Thoughts about Art,' in the chapters on 'Painting from Nature,' 'The Place of Landscape-painting amongst the Fine Arts,' and 'The Observation of Nature.'

or his absence of system, compatible with the degree of veracity we have a right to expect from an artist?

There is certainly a moral question here which deserves a little consideration. An artist sells a picture as being representative of a certain place, and on examination it turns out that the picture does not resemble the place, and that it is a mere fancy of the painter's. If it were perfectly understood that no resemblance was attempted, there would be no deception. If you order a picture of Adam and Eve in Paradise you know, without being told, that the figures are not portraits of Adam and Eve, but that they are either pure inventions or studies from Academy models; but if the subject of the picture were Prince Albert and Queen Victoria you would expect some degree of likeness, and consider yourself unfairly treated if they were not recognisable. There is a moral question, also, about the naming of pictures after places. It is done to profit by the interest which people take in places that they have heard of or read about, and it is not strictly honest to sell to them as portraits of places designs which are all but imaginary. Turner was an excellent man of business in his own way, and he knew that people liked to fancy that they were looking at the portrait of some definite place, and not at a mere 'composition.' The temper of the public on this subject is well understood by experienced artists. One successful old painter said to me, 'If I paint a landscape and call it a composition, people are not satisfied and think it too artificial, because they are aware that it is composed; but if I call the same picture by the name of some place that they can

find on the map, they are satisfied and look upon it with perfect faith, as a true representation of nature.'

There is, however, a certain remote relation between such a work as Turner's *Kilchurn* and the place it professes to represent. It bears about the same relation to reality that our dreams do when we dream of some place that we have visited. We then see places oddly jumbled together, and our memory, retentive enough of certain things, entirely omits others of equal or still greater importance. You may dream, for example, if you have been reading about Mont Blanc and St. Paul's Cathedral, that you see St. Paul's in the valley of Chamouni with Mont Blanc for a background, but that the Cathedral has neither dome nor belfry, just as Turner's *Kilchurn* had neither chimney nor turret; and you may perhaps see in your dream, without surprise, the waters of Lake Leman within a mile of the Mer de Glace. If Turner had simply visited Kilchurn without making a sketch, and afterwards made this picture of it from memory, intending it to be accurate, we should say that his memory was singularly defective. The experiments of M. Lecoq de Boisbaudran in the 'Éducation de la Mémoire pittoresque' have produced results with which no effort of Turner's memory, of which we have any evidence, will bear the slightest comparison.* This

* M. Lecoq de Boisbaudran was teacher of drawing at the École Impériale de Dessin in Paris in the time of Louis Napoleon, and he made a remarkable series of experiments upon his pupils to ascertain how far the artistic memory may be cultivated. His account of these experiments was published in a pamphlet (Bauce, 13 Rue Bonaparte, 1862). They astonished the most experienced artists, who saw them subjected to the most rigorous proof, in which invention was allowed to take no liberties. In Turner's work you never can disentangle memory and invention, so that it is really

work of Turner's is not remembering, it is *dreaming*, and drawing or painting the dream.

At length, then, after examining Turner's work and comparing it with nature and with the work of another artist, we have arrived at this conclusion, that in the year 1802 he had begun to paint his dreams. This is worth all the trouble we have taken about it, because the general belief is that Turner did not become a dreamer till a much later period.

And now let us ask, What are the nature and qualities of the dream? Is it mere confusion, or is it orderly with an order of its own, which is not the order of reality? The answer is, that the dream has great order and unity. Even the treachery of the artist's memory has helped the unity of the impression. A believer in the infinite perfection of Turner's mental faculties might affirm that he remembered everything, but purposely rejected what he did not consider necessary to his artistic intention. This would be a simple assertion which can be made of any one, and which, in the case of Turner, is without the slightest evidence in its support. It is a theory which may be eagerly accepted by those who have a blind faith in the genius of the artist, but when you come to examine his genius according to the methods of scientific criticism you will not accept such a theory

impossible to ascertain with precision whether his memory was accurate or not. He may have remembered accurately and been unfaithful to his accurate recollection, as he was to the facts themselves when they lay before him whilst he studied from nature. On the other hand, his memory itself may have been treacherous. My own belief is that he was too imaginative to have an accurate memory. I believe that accuracy is compatible with imagination, only when the feelings are not concerned, and feeling is always present in Turner's work.

so easily; certainly not until you are convinced that there is strong evidence in its favour. The real operation of Turner's intellect upon his materials appears to have been a selection, both by the fidelities of his memory and by what I have just called its treacheries. I may illustrate this by a piece of advice which was given to me by a distinguished critic of literature. 'Take as many notes as you like,' he said, 'but never refer to them, except by the memory, when you are actually writing. Your memory will select for you those which you ought to use, and reject for you, without any conscious trouble on your part, those which would only be an encumbrance to your work.' Without stopping to consider whether this was good or bad advice (it would not be good in all cases), I may say that it describes very accurately the operation of the imaginative intellect in art. The imaginative memory retains what is necessary to its work, and drops what is unnecessary. In the case of the picture before us we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the mere title. The artist calls his work *Kilchurn Castle* to catch the public; it is the tradesman, and not the poet, who names the picture. Kilchurn had not yet become so famous as Wordsworth and Scott made it afterwards, but it had already a romantic interest from the story of the 'Bridal,' and an interest of locality from its fine situation in the Highlands, which a few English tourists had already begun to explore. The real motive of the picture was not Kilchurn, but the play of clouds about the crest of a Highland mountain, *which* mountain signified little. The mountain is any mountain you please; it resembles Ben Lomond nearly as

much as Ben Cruachan: the castle is any castle you please; it resembles Ardhonnel *more* closely than Kilchurn, though Turner probably never saw Ardhonnel. The clouds play about the granite peak, a shower falling here from their trailing fringes, a sunbeam flashing there on the toppling silvery billows which are their everchanging summits, a level wreath of white vapour clinging in the shelter of the peak itself, great volumes rolling and surging in the abyss of the deep corrie, and on the steep stony sides of the mountains the purple shadows fall, vast and swift, veiling each of them its hundred acres of desolation. What has all this to do with the presence, or the absence, of tower or turret in the dismantled ruin below? Who thinks of man's work when he witnesses the majesty of the storms on the everlasting mountains? The clouds played so for unnumbered centuries before the little feudal fortress was built, and they will play just as merrily when every vestige of it shall have utterly disappeared.

Let us think then of Turner henceforth simply as a poet who is not to be bound down by topographic facts of any kind. We shall find evidence, as we proceed, that he did not pay deference, either, to the higher scientific conditions of pictorial truth: but this is a part of our inquiry which it is better to reserve until we are brought to it by the story of his life.

He paid as much attention to truth of all kinds as poets generally do. He lived in a world of dreams, and the use of the world of reality, in his case, seems to have been only to supply suggestions and materials for the dreams.

Had he lived till these days and been acquainted with our contemporary literature he might fairly have said, 'Why do literary men find fault with me for my free use of the poetic license? They take just as great liberties themselves. Talk of my *Kilchurn*, indeed! what do you say to Mr. Matthew Arnold's *Church of Brou?* Mr. Arnold tells us over and over again that the Church of Brou is in the mountains, close to the pine-forests.'

'Clad in black, on her white palfrey,
Her old architect beside,
There they found her in the mountains,
Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watched the builders
Till the church was roofed and done;
Last of all, the builders reared her
In the nave a tomb of stone.

* * * *

Upon the glistening leaden roof
Of the new pile, the sunlight shines,
The stream goes leaping by.
The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof,
'Mid bright green fields, below the pines,
Stands the church on high.
What church is this, from men aloof?
'Tis the Church of Brou.

* * * *

On Sundays, at the matin chime,
The Alpine peasants, two and three,
Climb up here to pray;
Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,
Ride out to church from Chambery,
Dight with mantles gay.
But else it is a lonely time
Round the Church of Brou.

* * * *

So rest, for ever rest, O princely pair,
In your high church, 'mid the still mountain air.'

The poem from which these extracts are made is very beautiful, and I would not have it otherwise than as it is; yet what amazing topography, especially amazing in dealing with a subject which is strictly historical and strictly local! The church of Brou is not in the mountains at all, but in the low country, six miles from the first rise of the Jura hills, and the scenery about it is that of the great plain of La Bresse. I know the church well. There is no leaping stream near it, nor are there any sun-proof pines. There is no climbing up to it, the road is good and nearly level. The church does not stand on high. The tomb of the Duchess Marguerite is not 'in the nave' at all, it is on the right-hand side of the choir. So far from being aloof from men, the church is within half-a-mile of an ancient town (Bourg en Bresse), which has now 11,000 inhabitants, with an old church of its own; and it so happens, that while that of Brou was building there was a bishop at Bourg, and the old church there was a cathedral. It is not probable that the burghers and dames came from Chambery to service at Brou, seeing that Chambery is more than a hundred kilometres from Brou—too much for a Sunday morning's ride.

This is but one instance of topographic inaccuracy in poetry; any habitual reader of the poets could find many others. Why, then, do we exonerate the poet and blame the landscape-painter? The reason is, that we have not yet fully conceived how identical the two artists are.

So soon as Turner reaches perfect manhood he becomes the poet, as much as the necessity for earning a living will allow him. He is not always quite so careless

of local truth as he was at Kilchurn ; he knows his public and his employers, knows that they will expect the Tower of London to be different from the dome of St. Paul's, and makes his subjects just topographic enough to pass for likenesses when the places are too well known. But he hated being 'mappy,' as he called it in his rough, unliterary way, and left that industry to others. It is certain that he would have abominated the work of our severely literal school, if he had lived to see it.

Most landscape-painters, as they advance in life, become more and more careless about portraiture of places; but what is surprising in Turner is, that he should have made the choice between art and nature at so early a period of his career. It is wonderful, too, that a man should love nature as he did, be continually observing her, really know more about natural phenomena than any of his predecessors, and yet coolly and deliberately prefer his own dreams to the beautiful and interesting places which he travelled so far to see! It seems as if he travelled because he could not do without the suggestion, the stimulus, of fresh scenes and places; but also as if his mind, when once fecundated by the sight of nature, must produce fruit of its own kind, and in its own way. It is said that each mind lives in its own world; how true this is of Turner! how true it is that every one of his pictures or designs is chiefly interesting for us as a new glimpse of that enchanted land which belonged to him and to him only, into which we can only enter by his permission, and with his guidance, out of which he himself could never escape!

CHAPTER V.

Turner elected R.A.—First continental excursion.—Turner and his father. —Pictures of 1806 and 1807.—Turner takes to etching.—Turner as an engraver in mezzotint.—The Liber Studiorum.

WHEN Turner exhibited his *Kilchurn* at the Royal Academy his name, for the first time, appeared in the glory of full capitals, with every syllable of his three Christian names before it. In 1801 he had been plain W. Turner, A.; in 1802 he became JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER, R.A.

He was only twenty-seven years old, a 'mere landscape-painter,' as critics and historical painters used to say, earning his living mainly by humble industry in the business of illustration, and yet he became a full Academician at that early age. His election is the more remarkable that he had done nothing whatever to bring it about, except his fair hard work in his profession. He was absolutely incapable of social courtiership in any of its disguises. He gave no dinners, he paid no calls, he did nothing to make the Academicians believe that he would be a credit to their order in any social sense. Even after his election he would not go to thank his electors, in obedience to the established usage. 'If they had not been satisfied with my pictures,' he said to

Stothard, 'they would not have elected me. Why, then, should I thank them? Why thank a man for performing a simple duty?' His views on this subject were clearly wrong; for the rules of good manners very frequently require us to thank people for performing simple duties, and the Academicians were not under any obligation to elect the young painter so soon: but how completely Turner's conduct in this matter proves that he can only have been elected on his merits! It is unnecessary to repeat what has been already said about Turner's good fortune in living at a time when the Academy would receive landscape-painters. His elevation to the full membership was of immense value to him in his career, and he knew this so well that he remained deeply attached to the Academy all his life. He was Associate or member of it for a full half century, and during fifty years was only three times absent from its exhibitions. The Academy had been kind to him from boyhood, an *alma mater* from the first; and now in the strength of his manhood she opened wide for him the gates of her Temple of Fame.

It may be a convenient help to the memory to join the election to the full membership with the abandonment of topographic truth in art. The coincidence is very close. The year when Turner appeared as Royal Academician was the very year in which he exhibited a picture conceived, in absolute disdain of topographic truth. From that time forwards he may have admitted some recognisable measure of such truth, to conciliate publishers or buyers, but his own mental emancipation from it was complete.

Let it not for one moment be supposed that, from the point of view of the higher art-criticism, I, or any one else, would *blame* Turner for emancipating himself in this way. There is no doubt a certain feeling of disappointment when we come to realise the almost incredible degree of his unfaithfulness to topographic fact, especially if we have a strong attachment to places and a feeble interest in art. But the artist in Turner gained wondrously by the liberation which sacrificed the topographer. From the time of his early maturity he became, above and before all other things, *artist*. It is not even accurate to say that he deserted one order of truth for another, that he quitted topography for the rendering of scientific truth of aspect; for although there is much truth in his works, he never hesitated to become utterly unscientific when his artistic instincts suggested that kind of unfaithfulness. It is not now the time or place to apply this kind of criticism; but we shall have to apply it later. For the present it is enough to say, that the young Academician had a temper as scornfully independent in his work as in his social relations, that he painted what suited him just as it suited him, and that the impulse to follow his own genius became stronger and more irresistible as he grew older. His temperament was full of audacity, self-centred, self-reliant, eager for success and fame, yet scornful of popular opinion—a contradiction, if it is one, very common in the characters of artists and men of letters, yet seldom so strikingly visible as in Turner; for no man ever loved fame and money more than he did, and no man ever condescended less to the

opinion universally received amongst the vulgar, that art is the imitation of nature.

Great Britain is an excellent country for a landscape-painter; but it is a country which, from its very nature, excites an Englishman's curiosity to see what lies outside of it. It is difficult, after seeing our sublime little northern mountains, to repress the desire for mountain scenery of a yet sublimer order; it is difficult, after following our comparatively short rivers, to avoid dreaming of those vaster arteries of the Continent which flow for two hundred leagues. Everything that England has awakens the desire to see something which she has not. After seeing Westminster Abbey one desires to visit Rouen, Amiens, Rheims, Chartres, and Beauvais; after standing under the dome of St. Paul's we should like to see St. Peter's at Rome. The Englishman has so much in his own island that he is educated into longing for more and grander things of the same kind; and it so happens that there is nothing in England except our ships and seaports, of which some finer, or at any rate bigger, specimen cannot be found on the Continent. For most things we are like children who have ridden on ponies, and conceived from that experience a peculiar passion for tall horses. Of course such an artist as Turner, with his intense appreciation of vastness, was not going to be confined all his life to the limits of our insular scenery. His first raid upon the Continent immediately followed the first exhibition in which he had borne the full honours of the Academy: let us remember this, for it is important. The whole of Turner's Continental work was done in his maturity,

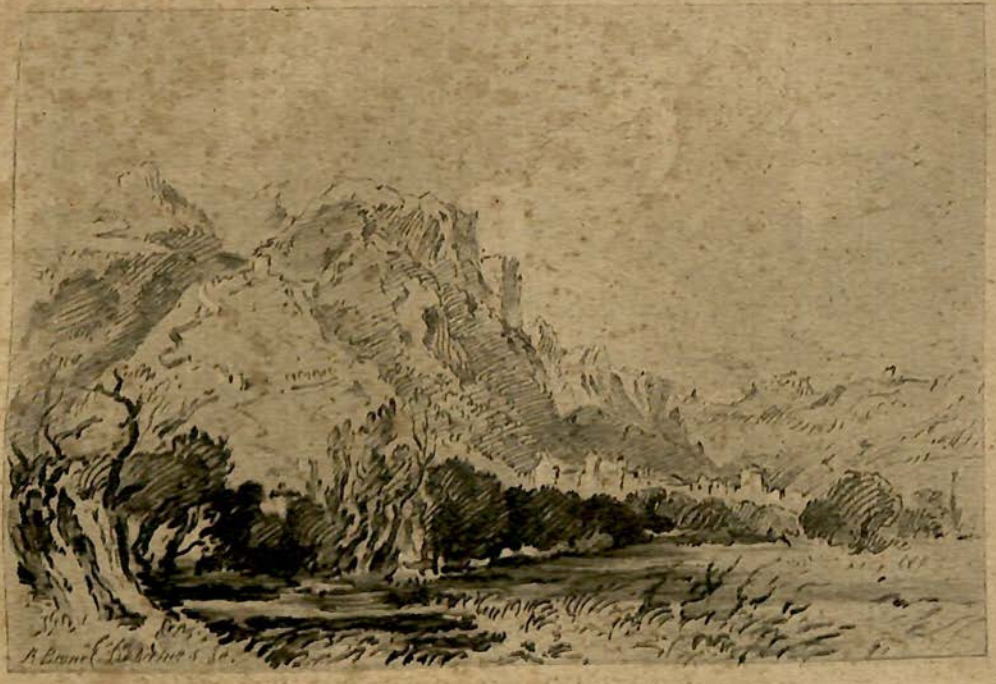
and consequently after his emancipation from topography.

His first impression of Calais was strong enough to suggest a very strong picture, the *Calais Pier, with French Poissards preparing for Sea—an English Packet arriving*, which has been etched not long since, on a great scale, by Mr. Seymour Haden. Luckily this work is now the property of the nation, for it is the first manifestation of the full energy there was in Turner's genius —of its energy, but not as yet by any means of its sense of beauty. The picture is full of life and motion, but the colouring of it is conceived as if it were intended to be etched, and not intended to be exhibited perpetually as a work in colour. The light-and-shade, too, seems to have been designed for the etcher, with his simple broad distinctions and vigorous darks, rather than for the engraver, with his subtle translations of delicate tones. Still it is already master's work, and if it had been exhibited two years earlier the Academical election would have seemed more the acknowledgment of success and less the intelligent anticipation of it. Another important result of this Continental tour was *The Festival upon the Opening of the Vintage of Macon.* As the sense of power had revealed itself in the *Calais Pier*, so the sense of beauty had its satisfactions in the *Macon Vintage.* It is a graceful composition, full of the sentiment which we call classic, with its noble river-divided landscape, its elegant trees, its pleasant slopes of land and joyous animated figures. It is, in short, a beautiful fancy with much southern poetry in it, carrying us half-way to the Virgilian dreamland, but it is *not* Macon. The real

scenery of Macon is interesting to the intelligent traveller, but it is in the highest degree embarrassing to the artist, and cannot be treated pictorially without the free use of the artist's license, about which Turner had no scruple. Not only did Turner permit himself the widest departures from *fact*, but he also (as at Kilchurn) neglected important truths of *character*. In the country near Macon one of the most striking peculiarities is the perfect flatness of the land on the left bank of the Saône, and the boldness of the slopes on the right, yet this strong contrast is not given. The river is a Turnerian river, but not the Saône near Macon; the vine-lands are Turnerian, they are not the vine-lands of the Maconnais.

From eastern France our hero crossed over into Switzerland, and seems to have made a halt at Bonneville, on his way to Chamouni—a longer halt than passing tourists usually make there, for he got materials for two pictures, one of the little town with Mont Blanc, and the other of the Château de St. Michel, at Bonneville. He went on to the Mer de Glace, drawing the glacier and source of the Arveiron; crossed the Alps till he got into the Val d'Aosta, and drew there also. Of his thoughts and impressions during this first journey among scenery which must have greatly excited him we know nothing but what may be gathered from his sketches. We have no ample correspondence, like Byron's letters from the Continent, giving the successive impressions of scenes when first visited. The feebleness of Turner's literary faculty, and the defects of his education, made writing irksome to him, whilst his total

ignorance of foreign languages must have kept him, when abroad, in too isolated a position for any profitable intercourse with the inhabitants. The man who could turn either the French or the Italian name for the beautiful valley just mentioned into such a wonderful muddle as the 'Valley of d'Aoust' seems a hopeless student of languages, yet he printed it so in the Academy Catalogue. He writes Macon, the town, with the cedilla (Maçon), as if it were the French for *mason;* a mistake which nobody with an ear could commit, after having been at the place and heard its name pronounced. He writes Arveiron, 'Arveron;' but this is more excusable, as it is a common English error, or abbreviation. The incapacity of Turner in all that constitutes literary power, even of the very humblest order—the power of the emigrant who can write an interesting letter to his relations in the old country, the power of the traveller who can keep an intelligible journal—was an incapacity so complete that the biographer has no materials for the history of the artist's mind except his sketches and paintings and the dates on them. What he thought, or whether he thought at all, is a mystery to us: all we know is, that he received a succession of landscape impressions, which immediately transformed themselves in his brain till they became dreams, and that these dreams either bore some resemblance to the places, or did not, just as it happened. At the same time we are not to forget that excursions such as this Continental journey had their real utility for Turner, but a strange kind of utility. They gave materials for new dreaming. The picture of the Macon vintage is unlike the reality, and



yet in some strange, unaccountable way, was suggested by the reality. So with the mountains. It is probable that Turner never painted a portrait of any mountain whatever: his way of treating Ben Cruachan (wholly arbitrary) is his way of treating Alp or Apennine; and yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that his travelling was of no use to him, that he learned nothing from the mountains in Argyllshire or Savoy. On the contrary, where another artist would have spent his time in the unintelligent copyism of particular facts, such as the shape of this or that rocky pinnacle or buttress (a shape which would be altered past recognition by walking a mile in either direction), Turner was imbuing his mind with those great laws of structure which govern every hill of one class and every mountain of another. All that this proves is, that his mind acted as the most elevated minds generally do act. The small mind learns painfully the particular fact, and feels lost if the memory fails to retain it; the large mind notes the fact, but at once passes beyond, to the principle, and after that holds the fact with a somewhat loose and careless grasp. Emerson says that in youth we remember painfully the very words of some great man whom we admire; but that when our minds have grown larger we become indifferent to this kind of accuracy, being ourselves capable of thinking the thoughts over again, in our own way. This was Turner's habit with regard to Nature. He did not care to remember so as to quote Nature word for word, but he put himself as nearly as possible in harmony with Nature, so that he might be

able at any time to create natural beauty over again in his own way. This is the sort of relation, and the only sort, which subsisted between the great natural universe and the little Turnerian one. From the date of his election as Academician, Turner fed himself at the everlasting and inexhaustible banquet of natural beauty, but only as an original poet may freely pasture his mind on the literature of other ages. In this free spirit he travelled; never resting long in one place, and never, or hardly ever, doing more than sketch with the pencil-point, altering everything that he sketched. On his return to London, after every such excursion, it is doubtful whether he ever possessed one accurate study the more, and it cannot be proved that he had any accurate recollection of a single scene that he had passed through. The real gain to him was of a different order. After a sea voyage he had the marine element in his mind; after wandering through Alpine valleys he came back with an Alpine education, knowing how a snowy crest shines in the sunset, how a glacier creeps down to a valley, and a waterfall leaps from a cliff.

When Turner became an Academician he took his old father away from his business of barber, and gave him a home in his own house. It is said that he was kind and respectful to the old man, invariably; which we may easily believe, though there have been stories to the contrary, originating in the simple habits of both father and son. It seemed to both of them perfectly natural that the elder man, having now much time on his hands, should occupy himself in little tasks which would save a shilling here and there; but if the painter

readily consented to this, was it not the most delicate conduct possible under the circumstances? Old William Turner had been industrious and economical all his life, and, like all old men who have been accustomed to work for a living, he felt the need of useful occupation. It is said that he acted as porter at his son's gallery, would stretch canvases for him, and do other little things, in all which there is certainly no real humiliation, but simply the gratification of an old man's wish to be useful. The relation between father and son is indeed quite the prettiest part of the life-story we have to tell. The artist was never hindered by his father, but aided by him in all possible ways with tender parental care and sagacious foresight. The son, on his part, was dutiful and filial to the last, taking the old man to his house, and drawing closer the bond of affection as the social distance between them became wider. Thus it is precisely when the painter wins the full honours of the Academy, honours which give a recognised and envied position in London society, that he takes his father home. A meaner nature would have tried to keep the old man at a safe distance. Few readers of this biography can have failed to meet with instances of professional men, brilliantly successful in the world, whose humble parents are never by any chance to be met with in their houses, and are never mentioned by them. Thackeray had certainly met with such instances, and was thinking of them when he described Sepio: 'He prances about the park on a high-bred cock-tail, with lacquered boots and enormous high heels; and he has a mother and sisters somewhere—washerwomen, it is said, in Pimlico.'

The house to which Turner took his father from Maiden Lane was No. 64, Harley Street. The artist went to live there in the year 1803. In that year he exhibited, amongst his other contributions to the Academy, an indifferent figure picture, *A Holy Family*, in which the early influence of Reynolds is very distinctly visible.

For the next three years there is hardly anything to tell of Turner's life beyond the mere catalogue of his pictures, and it would encumber the pages of this biography to give the titles of them all. The *Sun Rising through Vapour*, which now hangs with the Claudes in the National Gallery, was exhibited in 1807 at the Royal Academy, and the *Goddess of Discord in the Garden of the Hesperides* appeared in the British Institution the year before. Both these are notable pictures, but the Hesperides landscape has a certain fixed place in Turner's history as an artist which gives it a special importance. It was a very ambitious picture, and in it he attempted to combine, and to reconcile, something of his knowledge of mountain-form recently acquired amongst the Alps with his knowledge of landscape tradition learned from the old masters in picture-galleries. All artists attempt the reconciliation of some sort of tradition with what they learn from nature; but in our day we very seldom see a painter of any considerable power hampering himself with the orthodox classicism. If any classicism pervades some portion of the art of to-day, it attempts to show how much better we understand classic feeling than our orthodox predecessors did, instead of following blindly in their footsteps.

A modern critic, ignorant of Turner's real history, and finding himself for the first time before this Hesperides landscape of his, would say that here was a man still bound in the chains of tradition, yet struggling towards the truth of nature; a follower of the ancients, for whom there was some faint hope that in a remote future he might come to see the world with the open eyes of a modern. All this would be a complete mistake. In 1806 it is evident that Turner could have drawn mountain forms better than this if he had chosen; for he drew them better in 1801 with no other experience than a little knowledge of Scotland. His picture of Kilchurn, with all its topographic inaccuracies, was (for that time) a very remarkable instance of mountain truth, and the artist cannot have been made more ignorant of such truth by his experience of the Continental mountains. The *Garden of the Hesperides* is full of what seems ignorance of natural form and colour too, and yet it cannot have been ignorance. It was a return to the traditions of the picture-gallery, for which, let us bear in mind, Turner does not seem at any time of his life to have felt any hearty aversion. It pleased him to turn his back temporarily upon Nature, and fabricate a classical picture in browns and greys, with impossible geology, in the style of the old masters. There is no denying that the picture has considerable majesty, a kind of simple grandeur which the old painters cared for more than truth, and it is painted with a power which already rivals theirs; but it cannot give much satisfaction to any lover of natural beauty. The next year's picture, the *Sun Rising through Vapour*, is a direct return to nature,

and is the first decided expression on an important scale of Turner's master-passion in his art, the love of light and mystery in combination. Although Turner was only thirty years old when this picture was painted, it is quite mature in treatment throughout, and the proof that he himself believed it to be so is, that he selected it as one of his two representatives in the contest with Claude, which he certainly would not have done if the work had retained the slightest trace of youthful inexperience. The foreground is rich in fishing-boats and figures. In the distance are mighty ships of war, floating on a glassy sea. The sun is struggling through the mist, and lighting a few scattered clouds towards the zenith. Much of the foreground is occupied by a fishing-boat ashore and a group of fisherwomen on the sands, who are cleaning and selling fish. The whole scene is of a kind which must have been very familiar to Turner (more familiar than any gardens of Hesperides); for he liked to be with fishermen and sailors, and was an early riser, who had often seen the sun in the east through the mists of an English sea.

We now come to a new scheme of Turner's, which he began to realise in the year 1807. Clever painter as he was already, he did not yet earn very much money by the direct sale of his pictures; some of the best of which, though exhibited in the Academy and appreciated by his brother artists who elected him, returned to his hands after the close of the exhibition, and remained for long afterwards in his own keeping. He therefore determined to do what many artists are doing at the present day—he determined to appeal to the general

public through the medium of etching; but as the effect he sought required chiaroscuro of a very complete kind, both in fulness and in delicacy, he thought it desirable to add mezzotint to his etchings.

It so happens that these two kinds of engraving are the most opposite that can be imagined, and therefore the most naturally complementary of each other. Etching depends on lines, mezzotint on shades. In etching the darks are drawn, and every touch is so much added darkness to the work. In mezzotint the dark is removed to make light, and every stroke is so much added lightness. The faults of etching, considered as a representation of nature, are too much hardness of line, and too little delicacy of distinction in shades. These faults can be overcome, but not easily. Turner did not choose to take the trouble to overcome them. He was always a rapid worker, and liked expeditious methods. It is said that at one time of his life he admired the foliage of a brother landscape-painter, and asked to be allowed to see him work. After watching the painter for a short time he thanked him, but said that his manner would be useless to himself, merely from its incompatibility with rapid execution. Turner, indeed, seems to have shared Landseer's opinion, that speed was a good thing even from the artistic point of view, or at any rate he may have perceived that it had an important pecuniary value, and was necessary to enable him to earn his bread in the beginning of his career. Now painting of any kind, whether in water-colour or oil, is a rapid process in comparison with highly-finished etching in complete chiaroscuro. Turner had been accustomed to paint

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quickly, and he wished to etch quickly also. There was one way in which this could be done, namely, by etching all the organic lines and markings, and leaving the rest of the work, the fine shading, to the mezzotinter. With characteristic shrewdness he adopted this method, and thereby disembarrassed himself of at least three-quarters of the work to be done. In this way he reduced etching to a comparatively simple process, easily learned by any one who was already able to draw; and as he had a remarkable sense of the value of lines, partly a natural gift, and partly the result of incessant sketching with the pencil-point, the consequence was that he produced etchings with hardly any preliminary apprenticeship, which in their own peculiar kind as landscape markings for mezzotint have never been surpassed, and are not very likely to be in the future. The critics, however, who entirely neglected these works for many years, and did not recognise their merit until it was pointed out to them, are in the present day going into the opposite extreme, and praising Turner as a master of etching, just as if he had practised the complete art—as Rajon does, for example. This is only one of the innumerable instances of that *renchérissement* in eulogy which attends a great reputation. When it becomes fashionable to admire what a famous man has done, people seek distinction for themselves in praising him, and the art of discovering new merits in his works becomes a part of the critic's trade. At this stage in the history of a great renown, the critic whose convictions are based upon accurate knowledge finds himself so much left behind that anything he has to say seems pale and tame in

comparison with what others have already said, and so he is either reduced to complete silence, or else made to appear by contrast, something like a defamer of the illustrious dead. At whatever risk of this imputation, let me say plainly that Turner never in his whole life attained any technical power in etching beyond the very simplest rudiments of the art, and that he is not to be compared for one moment, as an executant, with the really accomplished etchers of the present day. There does not pass a month without the publication of some etching in the *Portfolio* which Turner could not have executed. He had just one kind of skill in etching, that of laying organic lines well which were to be mezzotinted afterwards. He could do this with singular strength and determination, putting very high powers of mind into his work, and proving the value of the etched line, as a skeleton to be covered with subsequent shading, better than any other etcher whom I could name. But I think that the fashionable enthusiasm for Turner's work becomes a downright superstition when it takes his etchings, without the mezzotint shade which he always intended to add to them, as models of what etching should be when nothing is to be left to mezzotint.

It does not seem very wonderful, when we know how simple was the kind of etching which Turner practised, that he should have mastered so rapidly the limited portion of the art which he intended to make use of; but I have always thought it very remarkable that he should have been able to make himself a good mezzotint engraver with the very limited amount of practice which he gave to it. He does not seem to have liked

the work of mezzotinting, for he did very little of it, and yet the little he did was good. The process was too tedious for him: the slow working from dark to light may be borne by the patience of an engraver; but it is not an artist's process, as etching is. The consequence was, that Turner generally left the mezzotinting to professional men, such as Charles Turner, Lupton, and others; nor did he always execute even the etching himself, as the engravers could do it for him from his own drawings. What he did invariably was an original drawing in brown, with pen-work for his organic markings, and shadings washed with a brush. From these drawings the engravers worked.

The whole scheme of the *Liber Studiorum* was suggested, as every reader of this biography is probably already aware, by the *Liber Veritatis* of Claude; but there is an essential difference between the intention of the two works, which a just critic would never overlook. Claude made drawings in brown of his pictures as they successively left his easel, just as David Roberts used to make memoranda with pen and ink to preserve for himself a record of his entire *œuvre*, and also to serve for reference in case of dispute about the authenticity of pictures attributed to him. In doing this, Claude had no notion of making a loud appeal to the public. His *Liber Veritatis* was a private possession, made public long afterwards by the engravings of Earlom, but not intended for publicity. The *Liber Studiorum*, on the contrary, was a direct appeal to the public to judge between its author and the famous landscape-painter of Lorraine. Another difference between the two schemes

was, that Claude had no design of proving to the world how varied were the resources of his genius. He simply kept a memorandum of each of his pictures separately, without reference to the others; but Turner had a great comprehensive plan, according to which every plate in his *magnum opus* was to form part of an important whole, so that the work, when completed, might be an epitome of the Turnerian universe. The contest is, therefore, one between a living man consciously resolved to exhibit his powers to the very best advantage, and a dead man who had no idea that there was ever to be a contest at all, and had done his work for his own private satisfaction. This is the first, but not the last of Turner's plans, which reveal to us the intensely ambitious character of his mind. It is probable that no artist ever lived who had a higher opinion of his own powers, or who thought more about his own fame. Those comparisons which modest people are anxious not to suggest, this artist deliberately invited. At a later time he gave directions that two of his pictures should be hung side by side with two pictures of Claude, and at the early age of thirty we find him determining to build himself a monument, so devised and so entitled that no instructed person shall ever be able either to see it or hear of it without thinking of Claude's *Liber Veritatis*. Little as the English artist knew of Latin, he found or borrowed erudition enough to call his publication a *Liber* instead of a Book—a *Liber Studiorum* instead of a Book of Studies. The suggestion of Claude's title is so exact that it is imitated, not only in the language and grammatical form, but even in the number of the syllables.

In Turner's scheme there was a comprehensive largeness, not less characteristic of his mind than the self-assertion which challenged the most famous landscape-painter of the past. He divided his studies into six divisions: Historical, Pastoral, Elegant Pastoral, Mountain, Marine, and Architectural. This is in the highest degree interesting, as evidence that the artist was himself perfectly conscious of the range and variety of his genius. It was very like Turner, too, not to be able to get through such a limited piece of literary work as the naming of his divisions without a blunder of some kind; so we find that one of his divisions is 'Pastoral,' and another 'Elegant Pastoral,' as if the second were not a subdivision of the first. It is like dividing the civilised world into Americans, Europeans, and Frenchmen. What Turner originally intended may have been to separate the classical pastoral in his works from the wilder modernism in which he was one of the earliest discoverers or innovators; but when we come to examine the works themselves, we find that if such an intention existed it must have been forgotten in the execution. *Norham Castle*, for example, is 'pastoral,' but *Raglan Castle* is 'elegant pastoral.' A *Bridge with Cows* is pastoral, a *Stone Bridge with Goats* is elegant pastoral. *Chepstow Junction of the Severn*, is classed amongst the elegant subjects, whilst a scene of watercress gathering near Twickenham is not. On the other hand, there is a reason why *Solway Moss* should not be elegant; it is too wild and northern, so it is put amongst the simple pastorals, with the *Farmyard with Pigs* and the *Hedging and Ditching*. We can see a reason for the

classification in some instances, but not in all. It is probable that if the series of plates had been carried out to the full extent which Turner intended, the classical subjects, for which he had always a predilection, would have been more numerous amongst those which he called 'elegant.' In the title of another of his sections there is a certain want of correspondence with part of the contents. What he calls 'History,' includes legendary subjects, such as *Æsacus and Hesperia*, *Jason*, and *Procris and Cephalus*, and one illustration of a poem which is certainly not historical, namely, the *Faerie Queene:* few Biblical subjects are also included in this section, and they seem rather strangely associated with those which we have just mentioned. It is difficult, when we look over the list of subjects, to understand how Turner intended the plates to be parts of a great whole, though his attempted classification proves that the intention was certainly in his mind. The artist's chief purpose would appear to have been variety, and yet even this purpose might have been more fully attained from the sketches and studies in his possession; for the mountain subjects are nearly all from Switzerland and Scotland, with nothing from Northern England, or Wales. It is very curious that, with Turner's classical tastes, there should be nothing classical amongst his architectural subjects in the *Liber*, unless *Greenwich Hospital* is to be considered so. He draws a crypt, a castle on the Irish coast and one on the Rhine, two continental cities and one English town, with two British abbeys, a cathedral, and the interior of a church, but never a Greek temple, or Roman aqueduct, or arch of triumph.

Turner managed the publishing business of the *Liber Studiorum* himself, and not so skilfully as a clever publisher would have managed it. The plates were not issued with that degrèe of *luxe* which is necessary to make a work of art look its best. The paper took the impressions well, but was not rich enough in quality to make the margins handsome, whilst each number of five plates was stitched in a dark blue cover, very inferior to the tasteful covers which are used for such publications in the present day. Seventy-one plates being published at the price of £17 10*s.* for the whole work, and one of these plates being a gift of the artist to his subscribers, it follows that the cost of each subject was five shillings exactly. Turner, with that desire to get as much money as possible into his own pocket, which always characterised him, and often led him to overreach himself in his unwillingness to let others make profit out of his work, spoiled the commercial chances of this publication by refusing the usual share of profits to the trade. It is true that these profits always appear enormous at first sight, and it seems pleasanter to an artist to receive all the money which the public lays out upon his engravings rather than let fifty per cent. of it go to the wholesale and retail printsellers; but as it happens that the trade finds purchasers where the artist himself cannot find them, the result of publishing through the trade is invariably better for him in the end. Turner not only employed the engravers himself at the very moderate price of eight guineas a plate, so long as they would work for him at that rate,* but he got up the numbers in his own

* The prices paid to engravers were first five guineas, then eight guineas, and afterwards ten guineas or twelve guineas.

house with the help of a female servant, who is said to have robbed him of many proofs when she had to stitch the numbers. As Turner was his own publisher we suppose that he must have had the trouble of collecting money from his subscribers, and of keeping the accounts relating to his publication down to the smallest detail. The first number appeared in 1807, and its successors followed irregularly until 1816, when the publication finally came to a standstill for want of encouragement, and because the artist had found more profitable work to do. The sale of the earlier numbers appears to have been larger than that of the later ones.

Now that Turner has become one of the greatest names in art, people eagerly contend for fine proofs of the *Liber Studiorum*, some of which have been sold for as much as £20 each, whilst a perfect copy of the whole work, composed of choice proofs selected from different copies, is now worth a small fortune. Prints, however, do not improve by keeping; and these proofs, which now sell for so much to connoisseurs, are not better in any way than those other proofs which the same class of connoisseurs thought so worthless in the first quarter of this century that hundreds of them were used for lighting fires. The *Liber* was neglected then, because Turner, though an artist of reputation, had not yet become splendidly famous; and it is sought after now because his name adds lustre to a collection of prints. It may be doubted whether the change shows any decided improvement in public taste. It is certainly very doubtful whether, if works of exactly equal merit were now published for the first time by an unknown artist, they

would repay the cost of engraving. Unhappily, in the fine arts, the splendour of the name, and not the quality of the work, determines the pecuniary result. Within quite recent years the pictures of Jules Dupré have risen to forty times their original value, and some of Müller and David Cox to eighty or a hundred times. The *Liber Studiorum* has risen almost in the same proportions for some states of the plates, though even yet a purchaser who buys to gratify his artistic taste only, and does not care to contend with rich people for rarities, may procure fair impressions of separate plates at a moderate expense.*

The commercial side of art is always variable and unsatisfactory to all, except those who make a profit out of it. The artistic merits and qualities of a print remain the same as long as the ink and paper last, whatever Fashion may have to say on the subject. We may therefore leave dealers and collectors to settle the current value of the *Liber Studiorum* plates from year to year, whilst we turn to the consideration of them from the artistic point of view.

We are all familiar with a most ungraceful little word, which it is almost impossible to introduce into writing of any literary pretension, but which so happily describes a

* It is difficult to understand on what principle the dealers now regulate the value of ordinary impressions of the *Liber Studiorum* plates. The writer of this note bought a good impression of the *Little Devil's Bridge* of one well-known dealer for £1 8*s*., and afterwards sent it to another well-known dealer to see what he would offer for it. The answer was, 'It is worth only a few pence.' This is a matter of perfect indifference when we buy only for artistic qualities; but collectors may do well to be careful. *Caveat emptor!*

common fault of common art that it is never likely to fall entirely into disuse. The ungraceful little word is 'niggling.' Well, the qualities of the *Liber Studiorum* are exactly the opposite of all which that word implies. Turner was in 1807 already so completely the accomplished master in art that he possessed to the full what Reynolds called the genius of mechanical performance. We should not use 'mechanical' in that sense to-day, because, to us, it conveys the idea of a machine's action rather than an artist's; the word we should use would be 'technical:' but we know what Reynolds meant, and if we did not his own explanation would make it clear to us. 'This genius,' he said, 'consists, I conceive, in the power of expressing that which employs your pencil, whatever it may be, *as a whole:* so that the general effect and power of the whole may take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate and particular beauties or defects.'

This is exactly the opposite of 'niggling,' which means a childish trifling over parts, and Turner in the *Liber Studiorum* followed the precept of Reynolds. None of the engravings after Turner have more of what artists call 'breadth' than those in the *Liber*, and few are so consistent in their simplicity and in the omission of useless material. The predominant feeling in these compositions is very serious; in many of them it is tragic or gloomy, and the light-and-shade is generally in a lower key than in the artist's later work in oil or water-colour. The work with the etching-needle, representing Turner's pen-markings on his drawings, is full of a masculine economy and strength, like the words of a

speaker who says little, but always to the purpose; but it is not pretty nor amusing, like the clever playing with the same instrument in the hands of some modern Frenchmen. The *Liber* shows a good deal of the influence of Cozens and Girtin, both in feeling and in method of using shade, and behind these there is the influence of Claude; but the sentiment is profounder than that of Claude, and the passion for natural truth is stronger than it was in him. In two or three of the grandest and most solemn plates in the series it has been believed, perhaps with reason, that the artist was working under the influence of Titian.

The finest collection of *Liber Studiorum* impressions ever seen together was exhibited by the Burlington Fine-Arts Club in the year 1872, and the catalogue of that exhibition affords some interesting fragments of information about the progress of the work in the hands of Turner and his engravers. Although the artist was his own publisher, he at first made use of his engraver, Charles Turner, in that capacity, until there occurred a rupture between them, due to the hardness and severity of the painter. Although, as we have seen, the price asked for the whole work was £17 10*s.*, the early numbers were charged to subscribers at the rate of 15*s.* for prints and £1 5*s.* for proofs. These prices were afterwards altered to one guinea for prints and twice as much for what the artist was pleased to call proofs. 'It is to be feared,' says the author of the Burlington Catalogue, 'that the difference between these two classes of impressions consisted wholly in the price.' The confused way in which the whole work was issued appears to have been still

further complicated by something like downright dishonesty. 'I am sorry too,' observes Mr. Thornbury, 'to say that there can be no doubt, from years of investigation by Messrs. Pye, Stokes, and other collectors, that Turner often took out the thickened letters of the plates in the bad third state and engraved open letters higher up in the plate: in fact, he sold sham proofs, having private marks and scratches to indicate to himself the various states.' If he did this, he is of course inexcusable; but as the plates had been worked upon by himself, he may have thought them as good as new. Mezzotint wears away fast in the printing, and if a plate has just been refreshed by added labour it may be equal to its earliest state if the artist has been happy in his additions. This may be an artistic excuse, but it is not a commercial one, because the commercial sense of the word 'proof' is an early impression before the plate has been refreshed by any restoration whatever, whether successful in the artist's opinion or the contrary. The reader would be unjust, however, if he inferred that Turner had no conscience. He was grasping, and yet curiously conscientious in his own way, and according to his own notions of what was honourable and just.

Amongst Turner's notes on the margin of the engravers' proofs we have some interesting bits of his mind, showing both his faculty as a critic and his temper. The *Dunstanborough Castle* was engraved by Charles Turner, who permitted himself the facility of a little aquatint. The painter, of course, detected this at a glance, and wrote coldly and severely.—'Sir, you have done in aquatint all the castle down to the rocks; did I ever ask for

uch an indulgence?' This is very like one of the Duke of Wellington's laconic reproofs, and seems rather hard when addressed to a brother-artist who, on the whole, did his work faithfully and well, especially when we consider that aquatint was not formally excluded from the *Liber*, but was employed occasionally, as, for instance, in the entire sky of the classical composition called the *Bridge*. One very important characteristic of Turner's marginal remarks is, that they prove him to have been quite clearly conscious of what he was doing, and of the artistic reasons for doing it: in other words, they prove that he had the conscious critical faculty, and that he exercised it on his own works and on the engravings from them. For example, on the *Morpeth* he writes: 'I think the whole sky would be better a tone lighter, besides the light clouds,' and then comes the reason, '*which will make the hill more solid.*' Here we have him anticipating a result quite consciously. So on the margin of the *Dunblain Abbey* he writes: 'The sky must be much lighter and clearer, and until it possesses *both* the other parts have not their value.' The reader will observe the Turnerian grammar in the last sentence, *possesses* being used for *is*; or else the writer has forgotten that he has used adjectives in the comparative degree, and is now thinking of the substantives *lightness and clearness*. In the note upon a touched proof of the *Little Devil's Bridge* Turner says: 'A slight indication of a ray of bursting light under the bridge would improve that part, and a few sharp white touches upon the leaves marked X, *because they are now two black spots without connection with the stems of the trees.*' Here again the reason is

given, and this time it is to prevent scattering, that great enemy of artistic unity. Curiously enough, on another touched proof of the same plate the artist had written: 'Be careful about the distance. It wants air and light scraping to render it like the place.' This is the only indication I remember of any anxiety on Turner's part to secure a likeness to the place. We remember how he treated *Kilchurn. Raglan Castle,* in the *Liber Studiorum,* fared no better. The plate is so unlike Raglan that the compiler of the Burlington Catalogue says, 'There seems to be no warrant for giving the name *Raglan Castle* to this subject; it is said to have much more resemblance to Berry Pomeroy.'

We know on the authority of Mr. Ruskin that the author of the *Liber Studiorum* disliked the sale of separate plates, because in his own mind there was a certain connection of significance between the subjects. After mentioning the castle and abbey subjects, Mr. Ruskin says: 'These are his types of human pride. Of human love: Procris dying by the arrow; Hesperie by the viper's fang; and Rizpah, more than dead, beside her children. Such are the lessons of the *Liber Studiorum.* Silent always with a bitter silence, disdaining to tell his meaning when he saw there was no ear to receive it, Turner only indicated his purpose by slight words of contemptuous anger when he heard of any one's trying to obtain this or the other separate subject as more beautiful than the rest. 'What is the use of them,' he said, 'but together?'

Surely there was little reason in this case either for bitter silence or contemptuous anger. Those hidden

meanings which it appears that Turner often intended to attach to his drawings or pictures have little to do with art, and might be much better expressed in a few words of written English than by any quantity of landscape design. Any versifier of ordinary skill could compress all the 'lessons' of the *Liber Studiorum* into a couple of sonnets, and the sonnets would not be very valuable to humanity for such wisdom as they might contain. We all know that strong castle and fair fame will alike fall ultimately into ruin, that death and decay are everywhere, and that bones will ever be found bleaching on the mountains. We all know that love has often been interwoven with the most pathetic sorrow; that it has often been associated with sad tragedies. So far as the knowledge of these things can be of use to our minds it is already familiar enough, having been the frequent theme of poets and moralists since the days of the ancient Hebrews, and any longer or deeper dwelling on such subjects would only make us morbid, like the Trappists, who enliven their days of taciturnity by the salutation, 'Frère, il faut mourir!' and the answer, 'Mourir il faut, frère!' The suggestion of ideas of this kind, which Turner bitterly despised the public for not understanding, is no doubt to some degree within the province of landscape art, which resembles music in its appeal to those who are susceptible to its influences; but it is in the nature both of landscape art and of music to express moods rather than thoughts, and it is unreasonable to be angry with people when they do not read thoughts in a language less adapted to their expression than

the poorest of spoken dialects. It is probable that much of Turner's contempt for the public may have been due to an exaggerated conception, very common with illiterate men, of the value and originality of such thoughts as he tried to express. It would have been easy, had he condescended to do so, to make his thoughts clear enough by the mere titles of his drawings; but he seems to have enjoyed, in a bitter way, the satisfaction of hinting at obscure meanings and then despising his fellow-countrymen for not following him. The real cause of this temper was simply want of intellectual culture, which would have made him perceive, that when a moralist desires to read solemn lessons on the fate of nations landscape design is an inadequate means of expression. Such culture would also have made Turner aware that there was no novelty in his choice of subjects. Many painters before his time had sought in ruin and decay the elements of pictorial solemnity, whilst such motives as Æsacus and Hesperie, Cephalus and Procris, and Rizpah, are in the regular repertory of figure-painters, so that it would be impossible to ascertain who first painted them, or to foretell the time when artists will finally reject them as outworn.

CHAPTER VI.

Turner a professor of perspective.—The Trafalgar picture.—First visit to Petworth, 1809.—Pictures of 1811.—Turner as a writer on art and nature.—Turner as an observer and critic.

IN the year 1808 Turner added the mysterious letters 'P. P.' to his Academical honours. These have puzzled some of his admirers in the provinces and foreign parts, but they mean nothing worse than 'Professor of Perspective.' The choice of the new Professor was at the same time wise and not wise. Turner was utterly incompetent to explain anything orally to an audience, but he was exceedingly conscientious, and did all he could by elaborately prepared illustrations on a large scale to make the principles of the science intelligible to his pupils. It has been wittily observed that the artist never practised what he professed. Certainly the perspective in his pictures is not faultless, but there is as much of it as we need. Nothing is more tiresome than an absolute scientific accuracy in these things; and we may be sure that it was as far from Turner's essentially artistic nature as that other kind of accuracy, the topographic, against which he rebelled so energetically.

The Professor was very conscientious about his work, making careful illustrative drawings, and taking much

pains to be understood, but he had the defect of a bad delivery. His fellow-Academicians may have made him a Professor because he drew what were supposed to represent Carthaginian temples in certain pictures of his, involving the more obvious application of perspective; but the real truth is, that when it came to practice he discarded theory altogether, and used a perspective of his own in a wilful manner, infringing the mathematical rules. He even maintained in his own laconic speech the necessity for such deviations. G. Barret had once drawn a temple in a landscape of his by rule, and Turner said, 'You will never do it in that way.' His own cannot be defined without illustrations which it is not worth while for such a purpose to engrave; but it may be said with perfect truth that, although possessing accurate knowledge, he preferred taste to knowledge, and knowingly refused to follow science whenever his artistic judgment suggested the policy of a deviation. There was nothing exceptional in this lordly way of dealing with perspective, for he was equally arbitrary in every other department of his art: in topography, as we have already seen; in the drawing of forms of all kinds, which he always forced into the shapes that he wanted; in light and shade, which in his works is generally beautiful, but very seldom scientifically true; and finally, in colour, where he permitted himself all manner of violence and aberrations.

The newly-appointed Professor of Perspective permitted himself the luxury of a suburban house at the end of the Upper Mall, Hammersmith. From that time till his death he seems always to have had two residences, and sometimes three, but they were never very remote

from each other. He may have thought them useful as a means of escaping from visitors, to work in undisturbed privacy. One biographer writes as if the Harley Street residence had been abandoned when the Hammersmith house was taken, but the Exhibition Catalogue gives both houses at the same time.

About this time, 1808, it is probable that Turner painted the big picture of *Trafalgar* which is at Greenwich Hospital. This has always been an intensely unpopular picture with sailors, and it has little artistic merit to compensate for its want of naval knowledge. The artist seems to have been so entirely absorbed by his wish to represent the apparent confusion of a great sea-fight, that he forgot the true sequence of events, and forgot, at the same time, to charm the lover of art by that subtle artistic arrangement which great artists have usually thought necessary even when representing the wildest actual disorder. The picture was, therefore, in a double sense a failure. It was painted for George IV., who, perhaps, may not have liked it, as he generously presented it to Greenwich, the worst place in the world to hang Turner, whether good or bad ; for, even if successful from the artistic point of view, any work of his would inevitably be too arbitrary and inaccurate to bear the acute professional criticism of sailors.

In 1809 Turner seems to have gone to Petworth for the first time. Lord Egremont was one of the very few members of the aristocracy who appreciated either Turner or the other great contemporary English painters. It is probable that this Earl, whom we may call a noble earl in a sense very different from the conventional one, had a character above

the vanity of caring to look well in the sight of posterity; but it so happens, from his great kindness to men of genius whose names are immortal in the history of English art, that he himself has become immortal also. Lord Egremont's nature was at the same time highly refined in its perception of artistic beauty, and unaffected to the extreme of simplicity in the ordinary intercourse of life. Turner had these two qualities also; he had the most delicate perceptions united to the plainest manners. All witnesses seem to agree that Turner and the great Earl got on quite well together; and this is in favour of Turner, not because Lord Egremont was a man of rank, but because he was a man of great discernment, and therefore not likely to tolerate about him any artist, whatever might be his professional ability, who had not the qualities of simplicity and genuineness. All who knew Turner personally appear to be agreed that, although he was not what is called a gentleman in the society sense of the term—not having the grace and polish which are necessary to that character—he still had good manners in his own plain way, and a good deal of delicate tact, often under apparent roughness. When Turner was at Petworth, his habit was to work very assiduously in the morning, and as he rose very early, it was easy for him to get a great deal done in these hours of privacy; but later in the day he would amuse himself, especially in fishing, so that the other guests imagined that he led quite an idle life. It is curious, in illustration of these habits of his, that his first picture of Petworth should be entitled in the catalogue, 'Petworth, Sussex, the seat of the Earl of Egremont—*Dewy Morning*.' In

1810 the three works exhibited by Turner were all views of seats—two from Lowther Castle, and the third this view of Petworth.

The next year, amongst nine works exhibited, we only find one gentleman's seat, but there are three pictures from ancient mythology or poetry, and one of the three is the *Apollo and Python.* Nothing could be more characteristic of Turner than to paint, the same year, *Apollo slaying Python with his Arrows*, and *Somer Hill, near Tunbridge, the seat of W. F. Woodgate, Esq.* Most artists, when they have once begun to paint such highly classical subjects as those in which far-darting Apollo is an actor, begin to entertain feelings of contempt for the common world of reality; but Turner is just as ready to portray whatever beauty there may be about Mr. Woodgate's country house near Tunbridge as if he had never painted either deities or dragons. His mind recurs also to Whalley Bridge, in Lancashire, which he paints with the remains of the Abbey, and enlivens with dyers who are washing and drying cloth. The same year one of his pictures illustrates flounder-fishing, and another crab-collecting on the shore at Scarborough. He also exhibits a picture of *Chickens*, showing a tendency to study poultry, which is not uncommon with landscape-painters.

It was observed, with reference to Turner's notes on the *Liber Studiorum* proofs, that they gave evidence of his conscious exercise of critical reason and judgment. His notes on his own private memoranda occasionally prove that he thought out his composition consciously, and fully understood the importance of those little con-

trivances and artifices which, however trifling they may appear to people who are not artists, are never foolishly despised by those who are. Mr. Thornbury selects as an instance of these notes one about bargemen hanging clothes: 'Bargemen hanging clothes on the shrouds—to avoid long lines.' Turner wrote this to remind himself afterwards that by hanging clothes on the shrouds of their barges, the men afforded him an opportunity, as an artist, of interrupting the long lines of the shrouds, which he thought might be inconvenient in the intended future composition. The reader will observe that the reason is given here just as it was in the notes on the *Liber* proofs. Turner also attempted to reason out for himself a theory of reflections in water, but not quite successfully, because the subject itself is difficult and obscure, and also because Turner's use of language was defective. It may be worth our while to examine his attempt at theory.

'Reflections not only appear darker, but larger than the object which occasions them, and if the ripple or hollow of the wave is long enough to make an angle with the eye, it is on these undulating lines that the object reflects, and transmits all perpendicular objects lower towards the spectator; but in receding lines, as well as objects, rules seem to lose their power, and those guides that enable us to find some cause for near objects lose their power, or become enfeebled by contraction in remote ones. It has been asserted that all appear equal from the base line of the water; but these axioms I dissent from. It is true, that by placing the eye equal to the water, it comes up to the rules laid down; but when the water is ruffled on which all things are to be reflected, it is no longer in right angles, but according to

the elevation of the spectator, becomes more or less an angle of incidence. If the undulating surface of the liquid did not, by current or motion, congregate forms, there would be no difficulty in simplifying the rules.'

It is always difficult to criticise theories which are badly expressed, because we have to deal with two entirely different things at the same time—what the writer said, and what he meant to say. The first sentence, 'Reflections not only appear darker, but larger than the object which occasions them,' is far from being universally true, though the statement is universal. For, to begin with, reflections are not always darker than the things reflected; that depends upon the state of the water and of the atmosphere immediately above the water. If the water is muddy in broad daylight, or if there is a thin stratum of mist on the surface, the reflection will be paler than the object. Again, reflections do not of necessity appear larger than the things reflected. When the water is perfectly calm the inverted image is of precisely the same size as the object; when there is ripple the image is elongated, but it is not widened, except under peculiar circumstances which we have not space to explain. Turner then says, 'If the ripple or hollow of the wave is long enough to make an angle with the eye, it is on these undulating lines that the object reflects and transmits all perpendicular objects lower towards the spectator.' This is true; but there is no necessity for the conditional, because all ripples whatever, be they but the eighth of an inch in height, are long enough to 'make an angle with the eye, and do

elongate reflections of perpendicular objects.' The next sentence is not very clear, but the writer seems to have intended to say that rules of a trustworthy kind have not yet been found, by the guidance of which an artist might manage reflections of receding lines and objects on the principles of nature, whatever those principles may be. The truth is, that in the present state of artistic and scientific intelligence there are many visible facts in such reflections which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for; we can therefore only paint things as they appear to us, without waiting for a complete theory of the subject. We now come to difficulties of another kind, due to Turner's strange use of words: 'It has been asserted that all appear equal from the base line of the water; but these axioms I dissent from.' All what? Can he mean all reflections? Does the 'base line of the water' mean the exact level of the water? If it does, the answer is simple—a human eye placed *exactly* on the level of the water sees no reflections whatever. The next sentence is unintelligible: 'It is true, that by placing the eye equal to the water it comes up to the rules laid down.' How an eye equal to water can come up to rules laid down we do not pretend to understand. 'When the water is ruffled on which all things are to be reflected, it is no longer in right angles, but according to the elevation of the spectator becomes more or less an angle of incidence.' The water is no longer in right angles with reference to what? Of course every one who has read an elementary treatise on optics knows that there is always an angle of incidence, when the rays of light rebound from the reflecting surface to the eye of

the spectator, and there is sure to be an angle of incidence in any case where there is a reflection at all, whether the surface is 'ruffled' or quite smooth. The final observation is at the same time more intelligible and more profound than those we have just examined. 'If the undulating surface of the liquid did not, by current or motion, congregate forms, there would be no difficulty in simplifying the rules.' Certainly, if there were neither current nor motion on the surface we should have perfectly calm water, like a flat looking-glass; and optical writers have fully explained for us the theory of the looking-glass, which is thoroughly understood. The difficulty lies entirely in the laws of ripple or disturbance of surface, of which nobody but an artist ever seems to know anything at all, whilst the most accomplished landscape-painters know very little that can be unreservedly and unquestionably stated.

I have quoted and criticised Turner's written observations on this subject, because his works prove him to have been a great discoverer in this department of natural truth, and it is interesting to see in how much mental confusion and uncertainty he was groping his way where not a living creature could enlighten him. The varied studies of modern landscape-painters have made water phenomena much better known, though not much more clearly accounted for, than they were in the beginning of this century, and the students of the future will find a mass of suggestion and example in the art of the nineteenth century which Turner could not find in that of preceding times. The water-painting of Claude, though very successful in rendering two or three common

aspects of nature, was so narrowly limited in its range that little was to be learned from him, though that little was of great value as a foundation. Ruysdael was equally narrow. Something more might be got from the Dutch marine-painters, but even their knowledge of water was as nothing in comparison with the variety of Turner's discoveries. Of all that he found out, what pleased him best appears to have been the long-drawn confusion of reflection upon a rippled surface, and he liked this so well that it became a mannerism in his later works. It is still, however, a great exaggeration of the truth either to say directly, or to convey the impression indirectly, that Turner had exhausted the phenomena of nature even in such a department of study as water-surfaces only. Some of the common appearances of water have not been illustrated by him in any work known to me, either in the original or in an engraving; and from some of the more complex and remarkable phenomena of water-surfaces he may have abstained from prudence, knowing that it was impossible that the general public should understand them. Mr. Leslie, in his *Handbook for Young Painters*, mentions some effects on water which (though after the death of Turner) he had never met with in pictures, and then observes: 'The truth is, we go on painting the things that others and ourselves have painted before, and do not look out for the art nearly as much as we should do.' One reason for this may be, that the class of critics who are called 'connoisseurs' always compare art with previous art, and treat discoverers scornfully, as ignorant innovators who do not know what is allowable

in painting and what is inadmissible. This traditional spirit in the public and its guides did much to embitter the career of Turner, though he succeeded in spite of it; and it kept down Constable's professional income so effectually, that he could not have maintained his family without private means.

Everything that can throw light upon Turner's habits of thought is interesting to us, so we may remark that he did not make notes exclusively of what attracted his attention as an artist, but jotted down all sorts of little odd facts in archæology and geography. His mind was not so much confined to art as we are apt to imagine, from his want of success in other directions, that it must have been. He had a lively curiosity, and that disposition to accumulate facts which is said to be peculiarly characteristic of Englishmen. Mr. Thornbury says, 'He takes notes like a spy or a pilot, and of things, too, that seem quite out of his province.' In this way he gradually accumulated a general store of odds and ends, which gave him what is called information and made him able to talk agreeably whenever it pleased him to break through his habit of taciturnity. Mr. Cyrus Redding was Turner's companion on a tour for a day or two, and says that he spoke remarkably little, using habitually very few words; but on one occasion they sat up late together in an inn, and then Mr. Redding tells us that Turner showed that he had a certain power of laconic criticism. 'I found the artist could, when he pleased, make sound, pithy, though somewhat caustic, remarks upon men and things, with a fluency rarely heard from him.' Some of the best notes on the

character of Turner's conversation in his maturity are to be found in the reminiscences of the artist given by Mr. Trimmer's eldest son to Mr. Thornbury for his biography. Turner and Howard, the Academician, stayed together at Heston, whereof the elder Mr. Trimmer was Rector, and the two painters had professional conversations, which sometimes degenerated into disputes. On one of these occasions Howard maintained that artists ought to paint for the public, but it is interesting to learn that Turner took the opposite view, and maintained that 'public opinion was not worth a rush, and that one should paint only for judges.' Mr. Trimmer confirms what others have said about the great landscape-painter's extreme sensitiveness to the ignorant and illiberal criticisms upon his works which used to appear in the newspapers of his day. 'I have seen him almost in tears,' Mr. Trimmer says, 'and ready to hang himself though still only valuing their opinions at their worth. It is curious that the artist, so little communicative to people generally, should have been quite freely communicative in his friendly private intercourse with the Rector of Heston, especially when we remember that the Rector belonged to the category of amateurs, for whom as a class Turner cherished feelings of unconquerable aversion. He appears to have given a good deal of practical art instruction to this clerical friend of his, who, in return, tried to teach the painter to read Latin—a hopeless undertaking, of course. With regard to Turner's estimate of ancient and modern artists, Mr. Trimmer says that he never appeared illiberal when speaking of the great masters; that he spoke most en-

thusiastically of Gainsborough's execution and Wilson's tone, plainly thinking himself their inferior; and that, on one occasion, before a picture by Vandevelde, he said, in answer to some one who observed that he could go beyond that, 'I cannot paint like him.' On the other hand, with regard to contemporary landscape-painters, Mr. Trimmer is inclined to believe that he considered most of them to be beneath criticism, and that he hardly did justice to whatever merits they possessed. It is quite possible that Turner may have abstained on principle from the criticism of living artists in conversation, knowing that his opinion would carry great weight with those who appreciated his genius, and fearing to do an injury to men who had difficulties enough to contend against. Although Turner could say sharp things when he chose, he had not the habit, unfortunately very common amongst artists, especially unsuccessful ones, of expressing scorn for the work of others. All who knew him are agreed upon this. They all agree, too, in describing his conversation as remarkably laconic. In this respect he seems to have resembled a distinguished artist whom we have recently deplored, the late Frederick Walker, who had the same reserve, the same disinclination to talk about art and artists, and whose intimate friends never heard him criticise a contemporary.

CHAPTER VII.

He removes to Queen Anne Street, 1812.—Excursion to Devonshire, 1812. —Turner's poetry.—Turner's prose.

IN 1812 Turner removed from Harley Street to 47, Queen Anne Street, West, which will always be intimately associated with his name. Here he had not only a studio to paint in, but also a gallery for the private exhibition of his pictures, a place which he kept in a condition little worthy of the treasures which it contained. I never visited the house in Queen Anne Street during Turner's life, but I well remember visiting it with Mr. Leslie after his death, when everything remained just as the departed genius had left it. There were about ninety pictures in the gallery then, in a wonderful state of neglect, the frames looking as if they had never been gilded. Mr. Leslie told me that he had known the house forty years, that during the whole time it had never received one touch of paint or repair, and that the papers had never been renewed. There was no picturesque magnificence about the house, such as artists often like when they can afford it. Turner does not seem to have had that delight in seeing varied colours and forms which tempts artists like Fortuny to fill their

studios with Oriental tissues and strange vases from beyond the sea, or carvings of other and more imaginative times than ours. On the other hand, Turner seems to have been equally indifferent to classic elegance in the interior of his house. Though his art education and his predilections were classical, he did not care to surround himself with the beauty either of antiquity or the Renaissance. We do not know that this was in consequence of any conscious determination: it seems more probable that early habits of simple and economical living may have led the artist to refuse himself beautiful things, simply because such an outlay of money seemed an extravagance; and it is perfectly possible that a man of Turner's habits might fancy that he could not afford such a thing as a marble statue, or an ebony cabinet delicately carved and inlaid with malachite or lapis lazuli. But there is also another consideration which may better excuse the meagreness of the great landscape-painter's surroundings, and his apparent indifference to those things of beauty which, as a poet has told us so exquisitely, can give endless pleasure to their possessors. Turner was one of the most imaginative men who ever existed, and such men are often singularly independent of what is visible. 'Certain localities,' says Emerson, 'as mountain-tops, the sea-side, the shores of rivers and rapid brooks, natural parks of oak and pine, where the ground is smooth and unencumbered, are excitants of the Muse. Every artist knows well some favourite retirement. And yet the experience of some good artists has taught them to prefer the smallest and plainest chamber, with one chair and table,

and with no outlook, to these picturesque liberties.' In Turner's house, however, there was not even this austere poetry of asceticism, which gives nobility to the cell of the monk and the tent of the traveller or soldier. There was no poetry in the place whatever, and it was this which jarred upon my feelings. A place may be bare and simple, yet affecting in the extreme. The remarkable simplicity of Goethe's study and bed-chamber is affecting in itself. In the study 'no arm-chair is to be seen, no sofa, nothing which speaks of ease. A plain hard chair has beside it the basket in which he used to place his handkerchief.' Of the bedroom, Mr. Lewes says, 'a simple bed, an arm-chair by its side, and a tiny washing-table with a small white basin on it, and a sponge, is all the furniture.' We like this absence of material luxury in the personal belongings of a great man, but then in Goethe's house the staircase and reception-rooms made a thousand appeals to the mind. There were the Olympian gods, there was a colossal bust of Juno, there were cartoons, sketches of great masters, and etchings, a collection of gems, another of bronze statuettes, lamps, and vases. There were portrait busts of illustrious contemporaries. In Turner's house there was little to show that he cared for any other art than his own, and not much evidence that he cared even for that, since he treated his own pictures with less care for their appearance and preservation than the humblest picture-dealer will give to his least valuable merchandise. But beside this absence of suggestion and of association with past art, the interior of Turner's house had the defects of ordinary English middle-class in-

teriors without their qualities. It had their tastelessness but not their tidiness; it was as dull as the dullest of them, but not so clean.

I remember that, as we were looking at a picture evidently painted under the influence of Stothard, Mr. Leslie said that he had happened to see Turner at work upon it, and had made the observation, 'So you are imitating Stothard!' 'Yes,' was the answer; 'and I wish I could paint like him: he is the Giotto of England.' The comparison seems to refer to the beautiful purity and simplicity of Stothard's art; but it scarcely does justice to the Englishman, who was much more advanced and developed as a painter than the contemporary of Dante. It is interesting, however, as evidence that Turner could admire heartily, and has the same value in this respect as his expression, 'I can't paint like him,' with reference to Vandevelde.

Some amusing anecdotes have been told of Turner in his house in Queen Anne Street; how he resented intrusion, and did not hesitate to show it; how difficult, almost impossible, it was to get the least glimpse of his painting-room; how little disposed he was to offer hospitality, except to one or two old friends, and then how very simple and primitive was his style of living. The one absorbing interest of his life was the passion for his art; and he liked to work in perfect solitude, because the presence and conversation of another might have disturbed the action of the imagination by making his hold upon imaginative conceptions more uncertain and precarious. But besides this reason for liking to be alone, there were others connected with the technical

side of art. The execution of modern painters is generally nothing but a series of experiments, many of which are failures, and have to be removed from the canvas. Turner's execution, notwithstanding its extreme rapidity, was experimental in many ways, and utterly unsafe, as is decisively proved by the non-durability of his pictures. If purchasers and critics had been admitted into his painting-room, they would have seen experiments of which it was as well that they should remain ignorant. Amongst others, they would have seen the indiscriminate use of oil and water-colour in the same work. An artist still living, whose name I could give, had permission many years ago to visit the gallery in Queen Anne Street, accompanied by a friend. Turner was not in the gallery, and did not show himself, so they supposed him to be out of town. Being left alone, the two friends amused themselves by examining the technical work in the pictures, and one, which was unfinished, had an especial interest for them in this respect. There were some masts and rigging in this work, very freely drawn, so one of the visitors exclaimed, 'I am certain that's water-colour,' and wetting his finger he rubbed it along one of the masts, which immediately disappeared. At that moment the imprudent visitors heard Turner's growling voice in the next room, and, filled with dismay, fled from the house precipitately, but unhurt. In this gallery he gave a very rough reception to a relative of his mother who came to make his acquaintance. On the whole, the house in Queen Anne Street was decidedly not a safe place to venture into during the lifetime of its master.

Turner spent a great part of his time in his studio, working from early morning until night, and wasting as little time as possible on the luxuries and ceremonies of existence; but although he was in the most complete sense of the expression a studio-painter, and did not belong at all to that school of rustic artists who live in the presence of Nature, still he felt now and then a longing for that fair world which is not visible in Queen Anne Street, and so he took sudden flights, according to his caprice, to some beautiful part of Great Britain or the Continent. His way of travelling was independent and peculiar. The increase of his means did not develop in his character any latent desire for luxury. He could be happy still, as he had been in his youth, with nature and his art, living easily in poor inns when better accommodation was not to be had, and leading the cheerful life of a pedestrian blest with excellent health and very economical habits. He was not unsociable when he met with kindness on his travels; but he well knew that more work, and better, could be done in solitude than in society. In 1812 he went to Devonshire, a county which he particularly admired, and it was on that occasion that he met with Mr. Cyrus Redding, whom we have already quoted. During this tour the artist gave ample evidence of his independence of comfort, studying effects quite calmly in an open boat on a stormy sea when others were sea-sick, sketching when he landed in a violent wind, supping contentedly on bread and cheese and porter, sleeping in a place where there were no beds by the simple expedient of laying his head on the table, and fresh the next morning for new wanderings. The

uncommon strength and soundness of his nervous system was proved by an unusually severe test. He was on Mount Edgecumbe with some friends, and engaged in conversation, when a battery of twenty-four pounders opened fire quite suddenly only four or five feet above the heads of the party. Although quite unprepared for the concussion, Turner was not startled by it in the least. It was one of the great advantages of his singularly perfect organisation, that whilst possessing all that extreme delicacy of perception which is necessary to an artist, and possessing it in a most exceptional degree, he had none of that nervousness with which men of genius are so often tormented and distressed. For all artistic purposes his nerves were as delicate as those of Shelley, whilst for the uses of common life they were as strong as the nerves of a common sailor. Few, indeed, are the common sailors who would not betray at least some symptom of surprise if a battery of cannon thundered unexpectedly over their heads.

Another peculiarity of Turner's was brought out during this tour, and on the very day when the incident of the cannon occurred. Notwithstanding his habitual solitude and parsimony, he could be hospitable when it seemed to him that the occasion required it, though it must be admitted that such occasions seem to have been of very rare occurrence. However, it did so happen in the year 1812 that Turner actually invited a party of ladies and gentlemen to a picnic in Devonshire, and that he provided everything, including wines, on a liberal scale, whilst he acted his part of host in quite a becoming manner. Leslie, in his Autobiography, tells a story

of a dinner at Blackwall, where there was a large party and a heavy bill. Chantrey sat at the head of the table and received the bill, so he handed it to Turner for a joke, as Turner had a reputation for parsimony; but in this instance the great landscape-painter did not act up to his reputation, for he insisted upon paying the whole, and did so *en grand seigneur*. It is evident, however, that these rare anecdotes of Turnerian hospitality would not be so well remembered if they were not in contradiction to the ordinary habits of the man.

The pictures exhibited in 1812 included the *Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*, which was remarkable, amongst other reasons, for a quotation from a manuscript poem entitled 'Fallacies of Hope,' the first sample of this poem which Turner offered to the appreciation of a discerning public. He had discovered quite a new and ingenious means of achieving poetical renown, namely, through the medium of the Royal Academy Catalogue. In this way the specimens of Turnerian verse, which were printed from time to time, attained quite a considerable circulation; but the effect upon the literary world can hardly have been such as the poet must have desired. The attempt was itself a remarkably apt illustration of that very common fallacy of hope which leads people, without the feeblest literary faculty for either prose or verse, to imagine that they can construct a poem.

The composition entitled 'The Fallacies of Hope' may have existed at one time, or it may have been only a project; nothing remains of it now except the few extracts in the Exhibition Catalogues. The painter left,

however, a good many fragments of other poems amongst his sketches and papers, for the habit of making poetical attempts was very persistent with him, notwithstanding the wretchedness of the results. It might be possible, indeed, if it were worth the expense, to make up a small volume of Turnerian poetry which might bear as a motto on its title-page one line of the poet himself—

'Lead me along with thy *armonuous* verse.'

Such a volume would contain some of the most remarkable specimens of grammar, spelling, and construction, that could be offered as exercises for correction to little boys at school.

'Hill after hill incessant cheats the eye
While *each* the intermediate space *deny*.'

'To form the snares for lobsters armed in mail,
But *man* more cunning over this *prevail*.'

'From his small cot *he* stretched upon the main,
And by one daring effort *hope* to gain
What hope appeared ever to deny.'

'The floating sea-weed to the eye appears,
And, by the waving medium, *seamen steers*.'

'Here roars the busy mell called breaks,
Through various processes o'ertakes
The flax in dressing, *each* with one accord
Draw out the thread and *meet* the just reward.'

'Have we not soil *sufficient rich* ?'

'Or sulphurous cloud at open east foretels
Where atmospheric *contraries doth* dwell.'

The above extracts exhibit the Turnerian knowledge of grammar. The spelling is generally better than might be expected in such 'armonuous verse.' The versifica-

tion, on the other hand, is perfectly amazing. There is never any certainty when two or three verses have been got through in the proper number of syllables that the one which follows will not be a slough of confusion.

> 'Fain would I offer all that my power holds
> And hope to be successful in my weak attempt
> To please. The difficulty great, but, when nought
> Attempted, nothing can be wrought.'

The first line here would pass if we pronounced power as a word of one syllable. The second line has two syllables more than its share; omit 'my weak' and it becomes readable, though prosaic. The third is peculiarly awkward to read, and has one syllable *de trop*.* The fourth has only eight syllables instead of ten. Still, if we do not count syllables, the mere roughness of the passage is permissible enough; indeed, it reminds me strongly of some of Robert Browning's reflections.

All these defects of versification, though they may make a poet unreadable, are not in themselves enough to prove that he might not ultimately have done good work. A far greater evidence of incapacity is the poverty of the versifier in ideas, and the laborious dulness of his thinking. There is not one ray of that poetic intelligence which makes things new and fresh for us. In a word, the written poetry of Turner is not only destitute of literary craft and skill, but it is *bête*. It is below the ordinary level of taste and intelligence amongst boys in English grammar-schools. Imagine a versifier stupid enough to write such rubbish as the following!

'To guard the coast their duty, not delude
By promises as little heeded as they're good:
When strictly followed, give a conscious peace
And ask at the eve of life a just release.
But idleness, the bane of every country's weal,
Equally enervates the soldier and his steel.'

* * * *

'Where the soft . . . . flowing gives renown,
'Mid steep worn hills and to the low sunk town,
Whose trade has flourished from early time
Remarkable for thread called Bridport twine.'

The bathos of this poetry is such that the most affecting subjects move us only to laughter when Turner deals with them. Here is a description of a death by lightning, which finishes so that one cannot think of the subject seriously:

'Dark indeed
Died the smitten wretch, not doomed to bleed.
The current dread charred with the veins
Sulphurous and livid, still the form retains.
Most dreadful visitation! Instantaneous death
Of supreme goodness allows the fleeting breath
To fall, apparently without a thought of pain.'

It is difficult to make out the grammar of the last two lines and a half. Is it the instantaneous death of supreme goodness which allows the breath to fall, or is it instantaneous death which allows the breath of supreme goodness to fall, and who is supposed to have been at all likely to think about pain? Is it death, or goodness, or the breath?

Another peculiarity of Turner's poetry is a sort of thunderous grandeur, often coming with the most comic effect immediately after a very matter-of-fact passage:

'If then my ardent love of thee is said with truth,
Agents the demolition of thy house, forsooth,
Broke through the trammels, doubts, and you, my rhyme,
Roll into being since that fatal time.'

The meaning of the lines about house property is not very clear, though one has a vague notion that something unpleasant has occurred, but the last line seems very sublime. The idea of the poet's rhyme rolling into being after the fatal time of that affair about the house-agents has in it an undeniable grandeur. There is a very striking passage about the ancient Romans in connection with a road of theirs near Salisbury. The second line of it might be most appropriately quoted with reference to the Coliseum, the Arena at Nîmes. and many other relics of antiquity:

'Then the famed . . . . street appears a line,
Roman the work and Roman the design.
Opposing hill or streams alike to them;
They seemed to scorn impediments; for when
A little circuit would have given the same,
But conquering difficulties cherished Roman fame.'

Turner never did anything worse than his poetry, except his prose. Yes, after fairly weighing the faults of both, we are driven to the conclusion that the necessity for some degree of attention to metre was an advantage to him in literary composition. Amongst the verses you will find a line occasionally which may fairly stand comparison with the more turgid ones in Thomson's 'Seasons,' or another line of a pedestrian kind, which is as good as the prosaic ones in Wordsworth's 'Excursion.'

1. { 'The straining vessel to its cordage yields,
So Britain floats the produce of her fields.'

2. 'Another guards the passage to the main.'
3. 'As morning fogs that rising tempt the breeze.'
4. 'And barren left through all the varied year.'
5. 'The parching heat of summer's solstice o'er.'
6. 'A gloomy lurid interval succeeds.'
7. 'Or on the blasted heath or far-stretch'd down.'
8. 'While the fierce archer of the downward year
   Stains Italy's blanched barrier with storms.'

These are not bad lines, taken separately, and if Turner had always kept up to their level he might have been a respectable mediocrity in versification, like many other artists who have tried their hands at poetry for amusement. The reader has probably, by this time, had enough of Turner's verse, and may find it a relief to see a specimen of Turnerian prose—not merely a letter to a friend accepting an invitation to dinner, but a philosophical piece about morality and art. Let him study it as long as he may think it worth his attention, and he will find it utterly impossible, I will not say to understand the whole, but to understand one single sentence in the paragraph:

'They wrong virtue, enduring difficulties or worth in the bare imitation of nature, all offers received in the same brain; but where these attempts arise above mediocrity it would surely not be a little sacrifice to those who perceive the value of the success to foster it by terms as cordial that cannot look so easy a way as those spoken of convey doubts to the expecting individual. For as the line that unites the beautiful to grace, and these offerings forming a new style, not that soul can guess as ethics. Teach them of both, but many serve as

the body and the soul, and but presume more as the beacon to the headland which would be a warning to the danger of mannerism and the disgustful.'

Of Turner's correspondence very little is in existence, and little can have been worth preserving. He could write a simple note, especially to an intimate friend; and though his spelling was always uncertain, he sometimes, by happy accident, could get through a few sentences without a blunder. Like most uneducated men, he disliked letter-writing, and he carried this dislike to a degree involving positive discourtesy to others. He received a good many dinner invitations, and though not what was called a diner-out, was on the other hand frequently disposed to profit by that rule of society which allows a bachelor to receive hospitality without returning it; so that although nobody could be sure he would accept an invitation, nobody, on the other hand, could be certain that he would invariably prefer his bachelor's fireside. His dislike to the trouble of letter-writing made him treat invitations in a very peculiar manner, and in a manner which only very kind and indulgent friends would have put up with. Sometimes he answered them, but he did not by any means consider it an obligation to do so; and he would go to dine, or determine at the last minute not to go, just as we go to the theatre, without writing anything to the provider of the entertainment. Whenever he went beyond a simple note his letters were ill-spelled and ungrammatical.

This criticism of Turner as a writer may here come to an end. Enough has been said to prove the truth of an

assertion made at the beginning of this biography, to the effect that he did not know the English language. His unsuccessful attempt to learn Latin with Mr. Trimmer is a proof that he did not know Latin. His outrageous spelling of French names is equally good evidence that he never mastered French, and there is not a trace of proof that he ever knew any other tongue. The plain truth is, that he never possessed any language whatever. Hundreds of foreigners can write better English than he could. There are English letters on my table from Dutchmen at Amsterdam, at the Hague, at Leyden, which are far superior in grammar, spelling, and construction, to anything that Turner could compose after living in London for fifty years, with access to the best society in England.

Is there any use, it may be asked, in dwelling upon these weak points of a great genius? Would it not be at once more agreeable and more becoming to veil them gently in forgetfulness? Perhaps it might, but surely the agreeable and the becoming are not the only purposes of biography. When we study the life of a man who is famous for what he has done, it is good for us to have no illusions about the range of his powers or the degree of his cultivation. The quotations which have been made will quite certainly prevent any reader from forming in his own mind the image of an ideal Turner and worshipping it. Beyond this benefit, which is not to be despised, we have the other advantage of knowing how completely, in Turner, the man was sacrificed to the artist, as gardeners sacrifice certain fruit-trees to their fruit. The pruning was not done inten-

tionally in his case. One dominant faculty absorbed all the sap of his intelligence, and left him as inferior to the mass of educated men in common things as he was superior to them in the perception of natural beauty. It may be a consolation to mediocrities to reflect that if they cannot paint they would infinitely outshine Turner at a grammar-school examination; but, without desiring to soothe the jealousies of artists who spell better than they paint, we may surely affirm that it remains, and must ever remain, an open question whether, if you compare Turner with what we call an educated gentleman, the sum of superiorities will not be on the side of the gentleman. The case of Turner is just one of those cases which confirm an old prejudice against artists, as craftsmen who have developed a special skill at the cost of more necessary knowledge and accomplishments. It throws, too, a very strong light upon the question whether artistic genius is a special faculty or an exceptionally high condition of all the faculties. I think that the case of Turner proves artistic genius to be a special faculty only. If all his mental powers had been of a high order he would have written his native language easily and correctly as a matter of course, and even composed good poetry, since he had feeling and imagination. On the other hand, his career proves conclusively that literary talent and the sort of education which fosters it are not, as so many believe, absolutely essential to the attainment of distinction and success in life. The lesson which such men leave to us, when we understand both their excellence and their deficiency, is not to humiliate ourselves, not to lose our self-respect in their presence, and

on the other hand not to attach too much importance to our own superiorities over them, since they have done so easily without our accomplishments. It is probable that every reader of these pages is greatly superior to Turner in what is held to be the education of a gentleman—why, then, should he humble himself before Turner as a sort of demigod? At the same time it is impossible to forget that this unpolished and illiterate being had the rarest gifts of nature of a special kind, and cultivated them, by incessant industry, to the uttermost; all which is a clear proof that the knowledge of language is not necessary to the exercise of high faculties.

CHAPTER VIII.

Turner at Twickenham.—English coast scenery.—Crossing the Brook.—Distances in elder art.—The fascination of the remote.—A second possibility of marriage, 1815.—Dido building Carthage.—Other classical pictures.—Turner and Scott.—Oil pictures of 1818.—Pictures of 1819.—Rome from the Vatican.—Whitaker's History of Richmondshire.

ONE of Turner's important changes of residence took place probably in 1813, when he bought a house at Twickenham, called Sandycombe Lodge, which he kept till 1826. In speaking of this acquisition as involving a change of residence, we mean simply that the artist changed his country-house, for he had no intention of abandoning his house in town. Turner was too keen a man of business not to know that a town-house was a convenience which in his case paid for itself, and he does not seem at any time to have had that intense passion for the country which makes some lovers of nature feel miserable in a street. He could, in fact, live anywhere; yet he had his preferences, and Twickenham appears to have been one of them. When Turner purchased the little place there was a small house upon it, but he was not satisfied with this, and erected another in its place, which he designed himself. He was also the architect of his own doorway in Queen Anne Street.

The house at Twickenham was called Solus Lodge at first, but perhaps the proprietor thought this only too characteristic, so he changed it to Sandycombe. Mr. Trimmer knew Turner at this place, and believed that his residence there had an influence upon some of his important compositions which bear no reference, in their titles, to any English scene. Twickenham is so near to Richmond that Turner received the influence of Richmond scenery to the full, and Mr. Trimmer seems to be right in the supposition that the character of the artist's classical compositions was affected by this neighbourhood.

In 1813 he painted the Thames at Kingston Bank, and he made a picture of Richmond Hill, which was exhibited in 1819. He had a boat at Richmond, and Mr. Trimmer said that he painted from nature on large canvases in this boat, a practice exceedingly rare with him. His other means of locomotion for sketching excursions in the country consisted of a horse and gig —an old bay-horse, neither tall nor swift, which served him as a model for *both* the horses in the well-known picture, *A Frosty Morning*. Turner seems to have driven about a good deal in a leisurely fashion, stopping to sketch when he found anything of interest. He seems to have liked the pony whilst it lived, and to have appreciated its good qualities, for he used to say that it could climb the hills like a cat and never get tired, and after the animal's death he gave it honourable burial within the precincts of his garden. It had rather a sad end, by strangulation in the night, having entangled itself in its fastenings, which were chains, used

in consequence of its untowardness. Man and horse do not seem to have got on well together, notwithstanding much affection on the human side; which, as usual in such cases, met with no return. Turner does not seem to have suffered from unrequited affection, but he grieved when the object of it was gone.

All the pleasant scenery about Twickenham and Kingston was far less built upon in Turner's time than it is now, and the railways had not yet deprived it of the character of rustic peacefulness; but whatever may have been its charms in those days, they were quite insufficient to bind down Turner for long. He was at the same time one of the most constant of artists, and one of the most various in his affections. A place that he had loved once he loved always, but he never seems to have had any disposition to anchor himself and his art together in some one pleasant haven never to leave it more. The Thames was very well to boat upon, and to be sketched occasionally, and the gig with the old pony might be useful rather frequently in the fine weather; but Turner could no more be kept within the limits of such citizenish excursions than Byron could be bound down to the immediate neighbourhood of Newstead Abbey. A list of his works during the time he had Sandycombe Lodge shows how little the Twickenham influences had done to settle him. Even when his purchase was quite recent he seems to have been generally thinking of something else. In 1814 he exhibited *Dido and Æneas leaving Carthage on the morning of the Chase*, and *Apuleia in search of Apuleius*. His only traces of Thames influence in these pictures are,

that in the first there are stone pines, which Turner may have been led to like by the Scotch firs at Richmond, and in the second there is a river with a bridge of seven arches.

Turner was led about this time to work heartily and hopefully at a kind of scenery which he always very much liked—the English coast scenery. A very able engraver, Mr. W. B. Cooke, undertook a laborious and costly publication of plates from the southern coast, and Turner did forty of the drawings, beginning with St. Michael's Mount, Poole, Land's End, Weymouth, Lulworth Cove, and Corfe Castle. By the time the forty drawings were finished in 1826 the artist had explored the coast, at least at intervals, from Ramsgate to Land's End. He did these drawings at first for most moderate prices, not more than £7 10*s.* each; they attracted his attention closely to coast scenery, and one consequence of this direction of his studies was a picture of *Bligh Sand, near Shcerness, with Fishing-boats trawling—cloudy sky.* This picture was exhibited in 1815, a very prolific exhibition year for Turner, including two of his best-known and most important pictures—*Crossing the Brook*, and *Dido building Carthage*, both of which were bequeathed by him to the nation.

Crossing the Brook is a piece of Devonshire scenery, with a vast expanse of distance, and one or two tall pine-trees in the foreground. It is interesting as evidence how very little material from nature Turner needed for a work of art, that the most important tree in this picture was painted from a slight pencil sketch, not of

large dimensions, which was reproduced in the *Portfolio* for November, 1877, page 175. The manner in which Turner dealt with this sketch is a good instance of his great power, for the tree is very strongly painted; not that it looks at all like a study from nature, but rather like a bold attempt to appropriate the merits of Claude. The execution is indeed founded quite frankly upon Claude, especially in the artifice by which the farther masses of foliage are separated from the trunk and branches, and made to appear more distant than they would have appeared in a literal interpretation. Although it is perfectly true that the effect of binocular vision can never be given on a flat surface, except by the help of the stereoscope, it is also true that there are artifices in painting which do to some extent compensate for this deficiency, and the chief of these artifices is the exaggeration of distance between near objects, such as the farther and nearer branches of a foreground tree, none of which can really be very remote from the spectator. The artist, however, may wish to make the spectator feel as if the air circulated amongst the leaves, and as if he could put his arms round the trunk if he went up to it; and to do this he may have recourse to certain tricks of the craft, which are allowable when the reason for them is understood.

Crossing the Brook is one of the most important pictures in the career of Turner, and it may be well to remember the date of it. This picture marks the transition from his earlier style to that of his maturity. If the reader will take the trouble the next time he visits

the National Gallery to compare it with Turner's work in 1803 or in 1806, dates at which he was already quite a powerful and successful painter, he will see great changes both in purpose and in style. *Calais Pier* was painted in 1803. It is magnificently composed, and full of all kinds of energy, manifesting the giant strength of Turner's mind and hand, but it is heavily painted and opaque. So great, indeed, are the impediments to a full enjoyment of the work created by these defects, that the merits of it may be more distinctly perceived in Mr. Seymour Haden's etching than in the presence of the picture itself, and most distinctly of all in the earlier states of the etching, when it is least encumbered by labour. This is so for a very simple reason. Mr. Haden has a well-grounded preference for open work in etching, and likes to suggest light and shade rather than to realise it. This etcher's taste of his led him to eliminate three-quarters of the blackness there is in the picture, and all its opacity, preserving only its glorious composition and energetic movement. This unfaithfulness to the letter that killeth secured the far higher fidelity to the spirit which giveth life, but by disengaging the spirit it has proved how much the genius of Turner, in 1803, was encumbered by traditions inherited from his predecessors. Even in 1806 there is no visible progress towards any self-disengagement or emancipation. *The Goddess of Discord in the Gardens of the Hesperides* is almost as heavily painted as the *Calais Pier*, and as much wanting in the charms of light and colour. In all such work as this nothing is really luminous, and

colour appears only in certain portions of the work instead of pervading it; as, for example, in the fish of the *Calais Pier*, or a piece of drapery in the later picture. There are hundreds of old pictures, often by famous men, which are popularly supposed to be works in colour, but which in reality are nothing but simple monochromes in grey or brown, with a little colour here and there to prevent them from being *avowed* monochromes. By means of this artifice a painter who does not feel that he has very much colouring power may gradually work his way from monochrome to real colour, and conceal the steps of the transition from the observation of all who are not acquainted with the technical craft of painting. Now, the picture of *Crossing the Brook* is scarcely, even yet, a work in full colour; for it does not go beyond the colour-range of the Dutch landscape-painters, with their greys and quiet greens for the earth, and pale blues for the sky; but there is an essential difference between this picture and the two before criticised, which is, that such colour as there is in it pervades the whole work. The light, too, is equally pervading. The canvas is lighted from side to side and from top to bottom. There are critics who consider this to be one of Turner's greatest works, but here they are in error. The full splendour and power of his art were yet to come, and this sober but admirable picture only cleared his way, as a successful experiment, to an art which had no precedent. One very essential thing in this experiment remains to be mentioned. This picture proved to Turner that he could paint a distance better than any master who had preceded him, and this, in the literal

as well as the figurative sense, 'opened for him new horizons.'

It would be premature, in this place, to occupy the reader's time with a dissertation on the distances which Turner painted afterwards, but there cannot be a doubt that the success of the experiment in *Crossing the Brook*, of which he must have been fully conscious, was the victory which nerved him for contests with difficulty in this department of landscape-painting such as no artist had ever attempted before him. The landscape-painters of other times had indeed frequently tried to get truth of tone in distances, and had succeeded; but their distances are always comparatively simple in treatment, even when the material in them is most diversified; and they appear generally to have laboured between these two alternatives, either that they had to simplify nature, thus losing its infinity, or else sacrifice truth of aspect to truth of fact, informing you truly enough what villages, houses, and fields existed ten miles from the spectator, but failing altogether to convey the appearances with which the effects of atmosphere and light must have clothed those various objects.

As an example of simplification I may mention one of the best-known Claudes in the Louvre, with the title *Ulysses restores Chryseis to her Father;* and as an example of minuteness without truth of effect, the very remarkable landscape seen through the arcade in the Van Eyck of the Louvre, *La Vierge au Donateur.* There is great truth of tone in the Claude, and I do not dispute the possibility of the effect, but everything shows that Claude considered simplification an essential quality in

the painting of distances. Not only are the hills flat patches of almost equally tinted paint, but even their outlines have a corresponding want of variety. Follow the line of the highest mountain, and you will scarcely find more thought or design in it than would be necessary to make the outline of a thimble or a sugar-loaf; whereas in nature, however much the mass of a mountain may be obscured by mist, and its modelling flattened, the outline, if traceable at all, is sure to retain its character. The distinction in tone between a hill on a misty morning and the sky behind it may be so faint that nothing but the most delicate art can render it; yet at the same time the line, if line it can be called, will be full of subtle incidents and changes, difficult indeed to follow, but not to be omitted without falsity any more than you could copy poetry whilst omitting to write out the words. When we turn to the Van Eyck, and look through the three arches of his arcade, we see a complete epitome of all that he considered noble or interesting in landscape; a broad river with islands and a fortified bridge, a city with churches on one of its banks and the faubourgs of the city on the other; in the distance there is a chain of mountains, the whole being very probably a reminiscence of the scenery about Lyons, or, at least, an invention suggested by that scenery. Now in this early landscape we have plenty of detail, for nothing is slurred over, either from negligence or in obedience to any theory of simplification; the artist has done his utmost in every way, and carried as well as he could, even to the snowy mountains, the shining crown of his earthly landscape, the same exquisite and loving finish that he

bestowed on the pearls of the heavenly diadem which the angels bear to the Virgin. But the details of the landscape, though numerous, are too clearly defined. The artist does not lose and find them as the eye loses and finds details in nature; he sees a certain quantity of them, which he sets before us in order like pretty objects in a shop-window: in fact, his arcade does strikingly resemble such a window, with models set behind it and carefully coloured. These, then, are the two main divisions of old landscape distances, the simplified and the minutely detailed: but besides these there was some clever distance-painting occasionally, in Dutch art, which deserves separate mention. Of Ruysdael's mountain distances little is to be said that is favourable. They are not so well coloured as those of Claude (being really nothing but disguised monochrome), and they are not superior to his work in knowledge; but there are flat distances in Dutch art, including some by Ruysdael, which show almost a modern sense of extent of country and play of wandering light.* Such, then, had been the artistic experiments made by others in this direction before Turner came, and his own early efforts showed little improvement upon his predecessors. It has been remarked before, that whereas with most men the maturing of the faculties leads from imagination to reason, from poetry to prose, this was not the case with Turner, who became more and more poetical as he advanced in life; and this might in some measure

* There is a fine example of this in the National Gallery now (Wynn-Ellis collection), the large Ruysdael, with a church and an expanse of open country beyond.

account for his ever-increasing tendency to desert the foreground, where objects are too near to have much enchantment about them, in order to dream, and make others dream, of distances which seem hardly of this world.

The fascination of the remote, for minds which have any imaginative faculty at all, is so universal and so unfailing, that it must be due to some cause in the depths of man's spiritual nature. It may be due to a religious instinct, which makes him forget the meanness and triviality of common life in this world to look as far beyond it as he can to a mysterious infinity of glory, where earth itself seems to pass easily into heaven. It may be due to a progressive instinct, which draws men to the future and the unknown, leading them ever to fix their gaze on the far horizon, like mariners looking for some visionary Atlantis across the spaces of the wearisome sea. Be this as it may, the enchantments of landscape distances are certainly due far more to the imagination of the beholder than to any tangible or explicable beauty of their own. It is probable that minds of a common order, which see with the bodily eyes only, and have no imaginative perception, receive no impressions of the kind which affected Turner; but the conditions of modern life have developed a great sensitiveness to such impressions in minds of a higher class. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to name any important imaginative work in literature, produced during the present century, in which there is not some expression proving the author's sensitiveness to the poetry of distance. I will not weary the reader with

quotations, but here is just one from Shelley, which owes most of its effect upon the mind to his perception of two elements of sublimity—distance and height; in which perception, as in many other mental gifts, he strikingly resembled Turner. The stanza is in the 'Revolt of Islam:'

> 'Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
> Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky.
> Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
> Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
> Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
> Scarcely the cloud, the vulture or the blast,
> Has power—and, when the shades of evening lie
> On earth and ocean, its carved summits cast
> The sunken daylight far through the aërial waste.'

This was written in 1817, just about the time when Turner was passing from his early manner to the sublimities of his maturity; and there is ample evidence, of which more may be said later, that Turner and Shelley were as much in sympathy as two men can be when one is cultivated almost exclusively by means of literature and the other by graphic art. But however great may have been the similarity of their minds, whatever susceptibility to certain impressions they may have had in common, the two arts which they pursued differed widely in technical conditions. It may, or it may not, be as easy to write verses as to paint when both are to be supremely well done, but it is certain that poetic description requires less realisation than pictorial, so that less accurate observation will suffice for it, and an inferior gift of memory. In the whole range of the difficulties which painters endeavour to overcome there is not one which tries their powers more severely than the repre-

sentation of distant effects in landscape. They can never be studied from nature, for they come and go so rapidly as to permit nothing but the most inadequate memoranda; they can never be really imitated, being usually in such a high key of light and colour as to go beyond the resources of the palette, and the finest of them are so mysterious that the most piercing eyesight is baffled, perceiving at the utmost but little of all that they contain. The interpretation of such effects, however able and intelligent it may be, always requires a great deal of goodwill on the part of the spectator, who must be content if he can read the painter's work as a sort of shorthand, without finding in it any of the amusement which may be derived from the imitation of what is really imitable. For all these reasons it would be a sufficiently rash enterprise for an artist to stake his prospects on the painting of distances; but there is another objection even yet more serious. Such painting requires not only much goodwill in the spectator, but also great knowledge, freedom from vulgar prejudices, and some degree of faith in the painter himself. When people see a noble effect in nature there is one stock observation which they almost invariably make: they always say, or nearly always,—'Now, if we were to see that effect in a picture we should not believe it to be possible.' One would think that, after such a reflection on their own tendency to unbelief in art and to astonishment in the presence of nature, people would be forewarned against their own injustice; but it is not so. They will make that observation every time they see a fine sunset or a remarkable cloud in the natural world, and remain as unjust as ever

to the art which represents phenomena of the same order. Turner had to contend against this disposition to deny the truth of everything that is not commonplace. He was too proud and courageous to allow it to arrest its development, and would not submit to dictation from any one as to the subjects of his larger pictures. He knew the value of money, and would work very hard to earn it, but no money consideration whatever was permitted to interfere between him and the higher manifestations of his art. His oil-pictures, by their very unsaleableness, gave him much artistic liberty, which he made use of to the utmost. If Royalty and the aristocracy had bought them the artist would have got rich earlier, but would have been less master of himself.

It is said, that in the year 1815 Turner might possibly have been married to a young lady who was a relation of his friend Mr. Trimmer, but, unluckily, he felt too timid to propose, though he wished the lady 'would but waive bashfulness, or, in other words, make an offer instead of expecting one.' She did not break through the decorum of her sex, and Turner never mustered the degree of assurance which is so common a characteristic of masculine humanity, so the end of it all was that he simply remained a bachelor. This is an odd instance of those unrealities, so nearly realised, the marriages that might have been. Perhaps the lady had a happy escape, for with all our admiration for Turner we may frankly confess that he had become by this time too much accustomed to his own way of life to adapt it readily to feminine exigencies. He was not the sort of person to associate well with anybody. His temper, in

this respect, is well illustrated by a little incident which occurred to him on a sketching excursion with a friend. They had but one palette between them, so it was settled that each should use half of it, an arrangement which answered pretty well for some time; but at length Turner perceived, or fancied that he perceived, something like an encroachment on his half, when he growled out angrily, 'Keep to your own messes!' Imagine such a temper in the partnership of marriage!

The most important picture exhibited in 1815 was *Dido building Carthage, or the Rise of the Carthaginian Empire.* This is one of Turner's best-known works, and is likely ever to remain so, because it has been hung near a Claude, according to the directions in the will, and so everybody tries to make up his mind as to whether it deserves such good company or not. This comparison it will be more convenient to postpone until our biographical narrative has come to an end. The *Dido* owes its origin to various causes,—to the painter's early architectural studies, to his assimilation of Claude's artistic ideas, and to an interest in Carthage, of a very peculiar kind. Leslie hit the mark in a single sentence when he said that the picture made him feel as if he were in a theatre decorated with the most splendid of drop scenes. Yes, that is true; and the only intelligible utility of such works is that they are a portable kind of decoration. It is conceivable that a rich man, having a magnificent room, might like to have such a canvas as this to give a pompous air to one of the walls of it, but it is difficult to imagine how it could give him any deeper or more delicate æsthetic satisfaction. As for intellectual

satisfactions, the thing is an intellectual misconception and mistake. It belongs to the old erroneous school of false history-painting, in which nothing is worth criticising but the technical workmanship in composition and execution. The representation of history so remote that we have scarcely any data for anything can never be very interesting. Turner's Carthaginian pictures were painted before the days of universal archæology, and he knew nothing even of the little that is ascertainable. It might have been worth his while to go as far as Tunis and imbibe at least the spirit of the Carthaginian scenery, as he imbibed that of the Roman Campagna. They who have been where Carthage once stood tell us that the landscapes are fine in character, with the lake of Tunis, the distant azure mountains, the scattered woods of olive and other trees, the vast plain, not unrefreshed with verdure. Then you have the fine North African atmosphere, with its perfect light, through which the colour shows itself, pure and intense, like sapphires and emeralds through clear glass. Turner did not concern himself, in this instance, with local beauties or characteristics, but invented a place which might have belonged to some English nobleman in the Georgian era with a fancy for stone and mortar and a taste for classic temples in his grounds. We feel, of course, the skill of the practised composer; the material is so arranged as to keep well together, but the lighting is impossible. Mr. Leslie pointed out that the shadows from the projecting pieces of scaffolding to the left fell in a direction only possible with a sun much higher than that in the picture. He was right in this criticism, and might have extended

it not only to other details, but to large masses, especially the mass of architecture to the right, above the arch of what looks like a sewer in the corner. All that is lighted as if the sun were fifty degrees (of the circle of the horizon) farther to the left. With the luminary where he is, the piece of architecture in question would have reposed in a broad, unbroken penumbra. The sky is heavy and rather unpleasantly opaque, but that may be due to chemical alteration in the pigments, for Turner used them without regard to permanence.

The first price Turner asked for this picture was £500 but he did not find a purchaser, and feeling rather indignant at this raised the price enormously afterwards by a process of successive doubling. He could do so without imprudence, as, in fact, he had determined to keep the work until his death. This determination was put to a very severe test some years later, when several gentlemen who admired Turner (Sir Robert Peel, Lord Hardinge, and others) offered £5000 for this and another picture of Carthage, in order to present them to the National Gallery. Turner was pleased by this offer, but adhered to his original intention.

In 1816 he was still in the classic vein, and exhibited two pictures of the Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius, in the Island of Ægina, which he had never visited. The material was supplied by a sketch taken by Mr. Gally Knight.

The next year Turner returns to Carthage, and exhibits a large picture, entitled *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire.* The work was accompanied by both prose and verse in the Academy Catalogue :

'Rome, being determined on the overthrow of her hated rival, demanded from her such terms as might either force her into war or ruin her by compliance. The enervated Carthaginians, in their anxiety for peace, consented to give up even their arms and their children.

> 'At Hope's delusive smile
> The chieftain's safety and the mother's pride,
> Were to the insidious conqueror's grasp resign'd;
> While o'er the western wave th' ensanguined sun
> In gathering haze, a stormy signal spread,
> And set portentous.'

The second Carthage was a much worse picture than the first, going still more into the accumulation of bad architecture, whilst the colouring is quite inferior, except in the sky. It has always seemed wonderful to me that Sir Robert Peel and his friends, with their excellent intentions towards the artist on the one hand, and the nation on the other, should have selected these particular pictures to immortalise him and benefit ourselves; and I heartily endorse Mr. Ruskin's estimate. 'It is, in fact, little more than an accumulation of Academy students' outlines, coloured brown.'

Turner was brought back to less ambitious, but really much better material, by a tour in Scotland in the year 1818. He was associated with Sir Walter Scott in the production of the *Provincial Antiquities*, and visited the localities in his company. The great novelist had a keen enjoyment of the things in nature which were the raw material of Turner's art; he delighted in natural landscape; and no artist ever had a stronger passion for romantic old buildings, especially when the interest of them was enhanced by associations of history and legend: yet, notwithstanding what was up to this point

a community of tastes, Sir Walter could not really enter into the mind of Turner, because, whilst delighting in nature, he had no understanding of graphic art. The enjoyment of what he saw: the heather on the moor, the grey walls of an ancient peel, the silvery birch and glittering rivulet in the dell,—this enjoyment, of which the refreshment is so often communicated to us in his works, was entirely disconnected in his mind from the kind of knowledge, far more painfully acquired, which is the foundation of the art of painting, and he lived in a state of happy ignorance about the subject. He was never tormented, like Goethe, with the longings of a painter or draughtsman, and had never gone through those practical studies which open the eyes of an amateur, even when they do not enable him to overcome the difficulties of art. He would have preferred, as an artist, Mr. Thomson of Duddingstone, the clergyman and landscape-painter, but 'supposed he must acquiesce' in the selection of Turner, 'because he was all the fashion.' This did not prevent Scott from using a few complimentary phrases about Turner's genius, phrases which are customary in speaking of eminent artists and do not indicate any reality of admiration. 'The Author of Waverley' must have had little conception of the splendid position which Turner was destined to occupy in the artistic history of England; and one cannot help thinking with a touch of sadness of these two men, temporarily associated together and nearer to each other as artists than Sir Walter could be aware. Lockhart, on the other hand, seems really to have appreciated Turner, even at that comparatively early date, which was before

the production of his most delightful works; for Lockhart said, even then, 'The world has only one Turner,' and spoke of him as 'a great genius,' and called his drawing 'magnificent delineation.'

The *Provincial Antiquities of Scotland* include three Edinburgh subjects and two of Dunbar, with views of Roslin, Stirling, Crichton, Borthwick, and Tantallon Castles, as well as Linlithgow Palace. The series finished with the Bass Rock. The drawings were well engraved by the best landscape-engravers of the day, who afterwards did so much to disseminate the works of Turner.

This year, 1818, was not a brilliant period for Turner's work in oil. The artist was like a ship in stays: the impulse from one tack had exhausted itself, the impulse of the next was only just beginning. There are no pictures at this period with the massive but cumbersome strength of the *Calais Pier* and the *Shipwreck;* there are none with the grace of a later time. Besides the difficulty attendant upon a change in style amounting to revolution, there was another which lay deep in the inmost nature of the man. Turner never acquired that delicate critical faculty which limits an artist to what he can do thoroughly well; his mind was too luxuriant in its fruitfulness to bear with the restrictions which the true classical temper imposes upon itself. He would never have endured to confine his efforts to some narrow specialty of his art, even with the certainty of a sustained and unquestionable excellence. He could not, like Meissonier, have deliberately resolved to paint only one sex, and adhered to his resolve. Like all men of

immense range, he was constantly incurring new risks in coping with new difficulties. So many things interested him that he was always tempted to express his interest about them in his art—having no other sufficient outlet, since literary expression, eagerly desired, was denied to him; and so his work as a painter, instead of being pushed steadily in a safe technical direction, became the vehicle of feelings and ideas which had little to do with landscape-painting. For example: the whole series of his Carthage pictures was suggested, not by a landscape-painter's healthy desire to paint the scenery about Tunis, but by patriotic interests and anxieties in the great struggle between England and Napoleon. He did not, perhaps, accept the Gallic theory that England *was* the modern Carthage, destined to destruction by the enemy which called itself the modern Rome, but he had a foreboding that it *might* be so—that the greatness of his country might bring down upon it the fate of those whom relentless Envy pursues to a final, irremediable overthrow; and this idea impelled him to paint repeatedly a vanished city, of which he knew neither the architecture nor the site. A peculiar misfortune attended most of his patriotic pictures. The *Trafalgar* was an impossible medley of masts and sails, which no seaman can endure and no artist would ever imitate; but he painted it from a sense of patriotic obligation—one of the false motives that sometimes intrude upon the domain of art. The same patriotism produced a *Waterloo* in the exhibition of 1818, a picture which only served to exhibit the artist's figure-painting to painfully manifest disadvantage. Turner has often

been unfairly criticised for the figures in his genuine landscapes, where, with few exceptions, they serve their purpose admirably. It would be difficult to name another landscape-painter who has used the *figurine*, I will not say better, but so well. His groups form an integral part of the scene, and keep their places quite harmoniously with the trees and buildings, so that we do not desire to have them elsewhere, and it is only an imperfectly-educated criticism which dwells upon their faulty drawing. But in such a picture as the *Waterloo* that faulty drawing becomes insupportable. The reason for Turner's failure in this instance is obvious. The human interest is too overpowering here, the landscape interest insufficient. It is a figure-painter's subject, a subject for Detaille or de Neuville, not for him who, after wandering in the tranquil paradise of Claude, was destined to open for us a fairer Eden of his own.

In the exhibition of 1819 Turner reverts to more artistic motives. One of his pictures bore the title (which looks, indeed, as if it had been written by a sailor) *Entrance of the Meuse—Orange Merchant on the Bar, going to pieces; Brill Church bearing S.E. by S., Marensluys E. by S.;* but the real suggestion of the picture would only occur to a colourist. The artist had a fancy for painting oranges bobbing about in sea-water, hence the picture. The other work, *Richmond Hill on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, had its origin in a rare and sudden sympathy with popular jollification, when happy Londoners, rejoicing that so good a prince should have been born to rule over them, danced with their Amandas, or walked the smiling mead, according to the Thom-

sonian verse. The following quotation accompanied the picture in the Royal Academy Catalogue:

> 'Which way, Amanda, shall we bend our course?
> The choice perplexes. Wherefore should we choose?
> All is the same with thee; say, shall we wind
> Along the streams? or walk the smiling mead?
> Or court the forest glades? or wander wild
> Among the waving harvests? or ascend,
> While radiant summer opens all its pride,
> Thy Hill, delightful Shene?'

How remote this poesy appears to us to-day! Not less remote these smiling meads and forest glades of Turner, missing alike the enchantment of imagination and the refreshment of reality. Leslie judged rightly when he said of Turner, 'Neither has he expressed the deep, fresh verdure of his own country; and hence he is the most unfaithful (among great painters) to the essential and most beautiful characteristics of English midland scenery. Constable said to me, "Did you ever see a picture by Turner and not wish to possess it?" I forget the reply, but I might have named his view from the terrace at Richmond; from which, with the exception of the general composition, every beauty of that noble landscape is left out. I remember, in a summer of unusual drought, when the trees became embrowned and the grass was burnt up, that the colour of the woods and meadows seen from Richmond approached to that of Turner's picture; but I never remember to have met with trees of such forms as those which he has placed in its foreground in any part of the world.'

In 1819 Turner went to Rome, one result of which excursion was the extraordinary picture, exhibited in the

following year, and still to be seen at the National Gallery, of *Rome from the Vatican.* Raphael and the Fornarina are in the immediate foreground, and some pictures are lying about on the floor and against the balustrade. The artist's intention may here have borne some reference to his own honours. He figured in the Catalogue for 1820 as 'Professor of Perspective and Member of the Roman Academy of St. Luke,' so we have both perspective and Rome in the picture. It is a frank violation of common rules which every artist ought to know and observe, especially the capital rule that perspective which appears exaggerated is to be avoided, and that interiors are to be represented as if the wall behind the artist were removed, so that he could place himself at a convenient distance, like a spectator at the theatre. The objects in Turner's foreground come forward too near to the footlights, the floor of the loggia slopes like the floor of a ship's cabin in a storm, and it is impossible to look at the picture without unpleasant sensations. One cannot imagine a Sovereign Pontiff walking along the floor of that corridor ; it is only fit for slaters or sailors. Equally wonderful is the arch through which we get the view of Rome. It goes over our heads like the Milky Way, and looks so prodigious in comparison with its next neighbour that few would imagine the two to be really of the same size. Turner's most enthusiastic admirer confesses that this is 'a challenge to every known law of perspective to hold its own, if it could, against the new views of the professor on that subject.' This may be the language of facetious criticism, but it expresses a known fact. Turner really did reject

the laws of perspective, though it was his office to uphold them.

A very slight suggestion or indication was enough to stimulate the imaginative faculty in Turner, and this may sometimes have been rather a misfortune, as it made him only too willing to work from memoranda supplied by others. In our own day artists use photography, and they use it much more than is generally supposed; in 1820 they had not that resource, but there was the camera-obscura. Harewell's 'Picturesque Tour in Italy' was illustrated by Turner from camera-obscura sketches. He got his own material in the north of England for Dr. Whitaker's 'History of Richmondshire.' If the reader will go back to the year 1799 (*Portfolio*, vol. vii. p. 101), he will see the beginning of Turner's connection with Dr. Whitaker and his works. After a long interval, the painter and archæologist were again associated together in their labours. Each of the three districts—Whalley, Craven, and Richmondshire—is an inexhaustible mine for a landscape-painter; but when Turner was illustrating the two first he was as yet very little of an *artist* in the higher sense of the word: he was a painstaking and tolerably accurate topographer, and little or nothing more. In the interval between the Craven and the Richmondshire he became more of an artist and less of a topographer than any of his brethren. It is difficult, in the history of the arts, to point to a more surprising transformation. It is as if some painfully dry chronicler of common events had won the power and achieved the liberty of a poet. Never was caterpillar so humble changed into such a brilliant

butterfly! The difference between Turner's earliest and his later work for Dr. Whitaker is, therefore, not to be attributed to any finer character in the scenery, but to the revolution in the mind of the artist. A painter of the second rank keeping nearly on the same level, would have made far more of Whalley and Craven, and less of Richmondshire.

Messrs. Longman gave Turner the landscape department, and they employed Buckler for the architectural subjects. I do not know the details of the business matters connected with this publication, but it appears that it cost £10,000; and I have been informed that by far the greater part of this considerable sum went into Turner's pocket. I think there must be some error here. There are only twenty drawings in the Richmond Series, which the artist began in 1820, a date at which the highest prices he received for drawings had not exceeded £100. The probability is, that the £10,000 included the cost of engraving; and it does not seem impossible to bring out the whole work, including the letterpress, for that sum. However this may have been, the originals were afterwards sold; and one of the principal purchasers was Mr. John Marshall, of Leeds. These works were kept at Halsteads, on Ullswater, by his son, Mr. William Marshall, who used to tell anecdotes about them which have not been preserved, unluckily for the interest of this narrative, Wordsworth being one of the audience. The subjects were not selected by Turner in an independent-artist fashion, but were chosen for him by a little company of gentlemen who made a tour for the purpose. The members of this pleasant

little society were Dr. William Turner, 'Old Tate,' the celebrated Master of Richmond Grammar School, and Mr. William Whitaker.

A very amusing anecdote has been told, with full details, about Turner being mistaken for a Jew. It has been said, that when he went to Yorkshire to illustrate the 'Richmondshire' he brought a letter of introduction from a publisher in London to one in Yorkshire, telling him, in conclusion, to remember that Turner was a great Jew, the consequence being that he was treated as if he belonged to the Jewish religion. The incident really occurred; but the person who made the mistake was a lady, Mrs. Whitaker (wife of the historian), who was Turner's hostess at that time. She had heard that the artist was a Jew, took it literally, as was very natural, and treated him as an Israelite indeed, possibly with reference to church attendance and the consumption of ham. One cannot help feeling for Mrs. Whitaker, who must have needed all the tact of a lady to extricate herself from such a position; but it is impossible to regret her *bévue*. It is one of the very finest and most perfect *bévues* committed in the first half of the nineteenth century, the only one quite equal to it being that of the Empress Marie Louise, when she told a distinguished statesman that he was one of '*les plus grandes ganaches de l'Empire*,' believing that *ganache* meant a Nestor, wise in council.

CHAPTER IX.

Transition to colour.—Turner as a traveller.—His system of study.

TURNER was an exhibitor at the Academy for the space of sixty years, with only four exceptions—1805, 1821, 1824, and 1848. The first of these omissions may be attributed to the necessity for earning money in early life by other means than the painting of important oil-pictures, and the last was due to declining health and power; but that of 1821 has been considered, perhaps justly, to indicate a pause in his career as a painter when a new conception of his art was taking possession of his mind. He had given up topography long before, as we have seen with reference to the Kilchurn, but the evolution from chiaroscurist to colourist was not accomplished so soon. The most famous of the earlier pictures, those solid, substantial pictures which are so strikingly unlike the manner of his full maturity, were painted simply on Dutch principles in grey and brown, with a patch of red here and there, to make people believe that it was colour. In *Crossing the Brook* we have yellow greys and quiet greens managed with the taste of a colourist who does not yet venture to employ the full force of his palette. The difference between *Crossing the Brook* and the

Garden of the Hesperides (which was exhibited at the British Institution in 1806) is, in principle, absolute; the later picture is colourist's work in quiet hues, the earlier is not colourist's work at all. This great transition having been accomplished, a farther step had to be taken, of greater difficulty than the first. To borrow a comparison from the war between Russia and Turkey, I may say that he had passed his Danube, but that in the mysterious distance the Balkan mountains lay still to be traversed. Here, then, he paused, exhibiting nothing in 1821; in the following year an unimportant picture called *What you Will;* in 1823, a great experiment in the new style; and in 1824 nothing again. This may be an appropriate time for pausing in the narrative of the Life to consider Turner's various methods of studying from nature, of which we have said little hitherto.

The reader may have felt some surprise at the cursory way in which the painter's art-travels have been passed over, the reason for this being simply our ignorance of any events which may have happened to him. No traveller has left less in the way of written memoranda or correspondence. His poverty in language amounting to absolute destitution in foreign tongues, and the uncommunicativeness of his character made his intellect useless for the study of human nature beyond the limits of his own country. He was the exact opposite of such men as Ticknor and Crabb Robinson, who always, in every foreign city, fell into the very midst of the most cultivated society, and heard all that was most interesting. Intellectual tastes, and enlightened interest in foreign politics and literature, would have been quite in-

compatible with the immense amount of professional labour that he went through ; and as for thrilling adventures, we only remember that he once slipped on a very steep slope of rock, or *débris*, in the Isle of Skye, and saved himself by clinging to one of the rare tufts of grass which are able to grow in such places. Some artists have passed through stirring scenes, and participated in them; the recently published autobiography of Étex, the sculptor (who did two of the groups on the Arc de Triomphe) is as full of change and interest as 'Gil Blas' or 'Don Quixote,' with duels, difficulties, disguises, glimpses of the highest society and the lowest, sudden contrasts of splendour and poverty, rapid changes of scene and circumstance, visions of womanly beauty, of manly courage, and incidents of pleasure and peril. The life of Goya was a wild romance ; even the lives of Fortuny and of Regnault are as interesting as the tragedies of Shakespeare. These artists were mingled with the boiling tide of humanity, and had their share of that stimulating commotion which is the intensification of existence. Turner knew too well the productive value of solitude and peace to expose himself to useless adventures, and he wandered about the Continent, so lately desolated by the most terrible of modern conquerors, in a spirit of perfect artistic tranquillity, conscious indeed of the miseries of humanity, and partially saddened by them, yet steadily minding his own business, which was to observe how cities, and rivers, and distant mountains, would combine into beautiful compositions. He had visited Rome in 1813, he revisited it in 1819, and saw the Rhine in the same year, but we

have no traveller's reminiscences to enliven our bare statement of the fact. The best account of Turner's impressions as a traveller is to be found in the vast collection of sketches bequeathed by him to the National Gallery.

Turner's system of study from nature was from the first adapted to the habits of a tourist who never remained long in one place. Some of his studies are elaborate; but it is a kind of elaboration due rather to a perfect command of means, and great practice, than to much time spent upon any one particular sketch. He was always a painter from memoranda, and his sketches, whether slight or elaborate, are really memoranda, and no more, except in a very few instances, when he tried for imitative quality in drawings of still life.

The collection of his sketches, now belonging to the nation, is so considerable, that students may find in it abundant examples of the various kinds of work which he did in the presence of Nature. Some of these sketches have been copied for this biography with sufficient accuracy as to form, and the reader may judge from them of the degree of elaboration which Turner usually considered necessary.

The character of Turner's drawings varies considerably at different periods, and during different tours. Sometimes the pencil is cut broad at the end, and the sketches are very comprehensive in treatment; at other times a harder pencil is used, and it is sharpened to a fine point. The papers vary also, being sometimes white, and at other times grey, of various tints and textures. Then, again, the relations vary between the line and the wash

in the degree of importance given to the one or to the other.

But whatever may be the differences between Turner's ways of sketching, he was always equally decided; he always evidently had determined beforehand exactly the kind of work, and pretty nearly the quantity of it, that he intended to put into his sketch. His ideas are perfectly clear, and his intentions settled. His interpretation of Nature is always carried up to a predetermined point, and no farther. Less consummate artists often find themselves led beyond what they at first intended by the interest of the subject and the pleasure of study, so that they do not know when and where to stop. In Turner's sketches, without any exception known to me, there is absolute self-control. He never finishes to his utmost unless it be to mark some particularly interesting portion of a sketch, and then the finish is knowingly restricted to that portion, and the rest is loosely indicated. He is not at any time the slave of Nature or her echo, but always her interpreter. In a certain sense his sketching is intensely conventional. I do not mean that he always followed ancient recognised methods, for he was an audacious innovator; I mean, that he worked as if drawing, relatively to Nature, were understood to be a summary and artificial method of interpretation. This may have been partly due to his love of rapidity. No one can look over the national collection of Turner's sketches without perceiving that he cultivated rapidity as an art, that he consciously applied his mind to those artifices which economise time, and which consequently enable an artist to get much from Nature in one sitting. This habit of

economy in time is often much increased by practice in noting down very transient effects, so that the methods which an artist has invented for this purpose may be used by him for things less transient when he is in a hurry. Having sketched clouds quickly because they retain their forms only for a few seconds, he may sometimes apply similar methods to trees and cities, when the diligence only allows him ten minutes to make his sketch. Many things conspired to teach Turner the art of using time to the best advantage. The effects which he cared to paint were generally transient, and his eager search for new impressions prevented him, when on his travels, from remaining more than an hour or two on one spot. So far as we can judge, the time given to his sketches from Nature varied from three or four minutes to as many hours. The most elaborate of them were retouched in the house afterwards, but it is probable that he never, or hardly ever, gave more than one sitting to the same sketch in the presence of Nature, at least during his foreign tours. He had several distinct methods of sketching at command, to be used according to circumstances, and was perfectly master of each of them; so that whenever one seemed likely to take too much time, another might be immediately adopted. Exceedingly unmethodical in the ordinary habits of his life, he was methodical in the extreme when working directly from Nature; and this is the more remarkable that he was not methodical when painting in his studio at home. The difference may be explained by the difference of leisure. In the studio he had time to try experiments; but there was no time for experimen-

talising on the road, with the inn to be reached at night.

The following classification will, it is believed, be found to include all the different kinds of sketches and studies which Turner usually executed from Nature.

1. *Lead pencil on white paper.*—Many of these pencil studies are done with the point of a hard pencil, kept well sharpened, especially for architectural material. Shade is either not indicated at all, or very slightly, the studies of this class being strictly notes of form. Even form, however, is far from being complete; there is only just as much of it as the artist thought indispensable. For example: in architecture, when details were repeated in the building, Turner would often draw one of them carefully, and indicate the rest; and in landscape he would indicate foliage in a summary way by loops. In these pencil studies Turner never came nearer to imitation than the very simplest etching. Sometimes the loops would be rejected for a comprehensive sketching of masses, with a slight indication of shade, consisting generally of a few diagonal lines kept well open. The reader may judge of the more complete pencil studies by referring to the sheep and the pine-tree on pages 174 and 175 of the *Portfolio* for 1876, and to the landscape on page 189. He will see at once, that notwithstanding Turner's great knowledge of light and shade, he was very sparing of it in sketches of this class, yet he often made use of them afterwards for the most elaborate works in water-colour or oil. There are instances in which shade is just indicated with a slight rubbing. He seems to have had recourse to pencil-sketching at all

periods of his life; but rarely to have practised highly-finished pencil drawing, as the old figure-painters used to do. The reason for this is, that when he had time for elaboration he took up colour. Pencil, in his system, was simply used for memoranda, unless in some early work.

2. *Broad lead pencil on buff paper, white lights in body colour, yellow occasionally used.* — An early series of sketches in Scotland are done in this manner. These sketches are remarkable for breadth carried to excess, for they contain hardly any information about matters of detail of the kind that a painter needs. The finality of them is such that they look as if the artist had no other object than their production, and was fully satisfied with broadly-shaded, but really very empty, spaces. These Scottish drawings are rather large, which makes us more alive to their want of detail.

3. *Black and white chalk on grey paper.*—Turner seems to have been rather fond of black and white chalk early in the century, but he afterwards preferred body-colour for lights, except in correcting proofs of engravings. He used chalks magnificently, but with the utmost carelessness as to preservation. 'These drawings,' says Mr. Ruskin, in speaking of a fine series of them, 'were on leaves of a folio book, which, for the most part, is dashed over with such things on both sides of its thin, grey leaves; the peculiar ingenuity of the arrangement being that each leaf has half of *one* sketch on its front and half of another on its back, so that, mounting one whole sketch must generally hide the halves of two. The further advantage of the plan is that the white chalk

touches, on which everything depends, rub partly off every time the leaves are turned ; besides that a quantity of the said chalk, shattered by Turner's energetic thrusts with it, is accumulated in a kind of Alpine *débris* in the joints, shaking out, and lodging in unexpected knots of chalk indigestion whenever the volume is shut ; and, to make the whole thing perfect, the paper is so thin and old that it will hardly bear even the most loving handling, much less the rack and wear of turning backwards and forwards on a mount, if attached by one edge.'

There are some noble studies of boats of this class, executed with great simplicity and directness of method, but with consummate knowledge. Turner does not seem to have troubled himself much about fixing, which lowers the whites. Neither did he care to finish his chalk drawings very far.

4. *Black chalk on grey paper, with white lights in body-colour.*—An example of this is one of his studies in Savoy, that of *Vareppe*, executed in 1802. It is sketched first in lead pencil, slightly, on dark-grey paper, almost brown, then drawn boldly in black chalk, and finally touched with brush-white.

5. *Pen sketches on grey paper, with white lights in chalk.*—Some of the sketches in France in the middle time of the artist's career were done in this manner. The ink is black, and the handling very swift and light. Neither this combination nor the preceding one is, however, technically harmonious. Chalk and pen-work do not go well together, neither do black chalk and brush-white. A better combination is the following :

6. *Pen sketches on grey paper, with white lights in*

body-colour.—Many of Turner's best and most rapid sketches are done in this manner, which is valuable for its permanence and precision. Nothing can be clearer than a pen line in good black ink, and the point of the brush can lay the body-colour in the smallest touches and sparkles. The paper which Turner preferred for this sort of sketching was of a blue grey, and he liked (without using it exclusively) the kind which has a blue fibre in grey pulp.

7. *Pencil sketches on grey paper, with white lights in body-colour.*—The pencil used is generally hard and pointed, and the same method is followed as in the pencil sketches on white paper. Some of these studies on grey paper are very elaborate, noting down abundant details of cities, etc., with numerous touches in white to explain them more clearly; but they do not attempt any complete expression of light and shade. There is a very fine general view of Rome in the national collection of this class.

8. *White paper with a flat wash of grey. On this a drawing in black chalk coloured afterwards in water-colour, with lights obtained either by scraping or by body-colour.*—At first sight the student is likely to imagine that these studies are done on paper that was grey when manufactured; but the work of the penknife shows that the paper was really white and tinted by Turner himself. This combination of methods is excellent for its economy of time. The forms are got rapidly in chalk, and an artist so skilful in water-colour as Turner was would add the washes in an hour. The sketches of this class are large, and very bold in treatment; and

there is nothing in the national collection which proves more decidedly the colossal strength of Turner's mind and hand when he was excited by the sublimity of Nature, and utterly heedless of the public. The flat wash differs in tint in the different drawings. Sometimes it is dark, and so warm as to be almost brown; at others, it is a yellowish-grey, the tint being chosen so as to do the most it can towards advancing the drawing. The work of the penknife and the brush for lights is also far from being uniform. For example: there is a noble sketch of the Old Devil's Bridge, St. Gothard, which is especially remarkable for the work of the penknife in the foaming torrent. The St. Gothard, with the bit of yellow sky at the top of the drawing, and rising clouds amongst the pines in the chasm, is also a most noble specimen of the same kind of work, and a great example of sublimity in colouring. I use the word *colouring*, and not *colour*, intentionally here, because these sketches are really coloured drawings. For breadth of handling in the application of the washes on the drawing I may mention the *Mer de Glace, Chamouni*, and *Mer de Glace, Aiguille Charmoz*, especially the latter. In these two sketches the high lights are in body-colour. In the *Source of the Arveiron* the lights are obtained in that way, and with the knife also.

9. *Water-colour on tinted papers.*—Turner was very fond of tinted papers for water-colour sketching, and used them of various kinds, a cool blue-grey predominating. The following brief descriptions of a few examples will show how he dealt with them:

Bonneville, Savoy. Firmly drawn in lead pencil first

the drawing left very visible, especially in the foreground. Washed in water-colour and heightened with body-colour lights.

Rome, the Alban Mount. Dark grey paper, black pencil; abundant washes in water-colour with a full brush.

Studies at Marly and Rouen. Dark grey-brown paper; pencil sketch washed with half-colour tints, rapidly dashed on with a full brush; lights in body-colour.

Rome. Pearly-grey paper; drawing with the point of a hard pencil; water-colour employed delicately and partially, especially in the distances. Retouches in opaque colour.

Rome, St. Peter's. Pearly-grey paper, the first drawing in hard pencil; the second with the brush point, introducing much golden colour under the arches.

Honfleur. Blue-grey paper; all organic lines and markings in indelible brown ink, afterwards washed over in water-colour.*

Effects of Sky and Sea. Some studies of sky and sea are done in bold touches and washes with a full brush, there being no preparatory markings with the pencil.

A series of late Sketches of Venice. There is an astonishing Venetian Series in the national collection much more Turnerian than natural, but extremely interesting on account of the plain evidence they give about the principles of his later manner in water-colour,

* Turner often used penwork under water-colour, as he did etching under mezzotint.

more visible in sketches than in more highly-finished drawings. The paper is a mauve-grey, the pencil work pale, so as to become invisible under the wash ; and the wash itself is very broad, and in very pure colours. On this comes a second drawing with the point of the brush, the vermilion lines characteristic of Turner's late manner being added in this way. Besides these, there are skilful touches in thick colour, or with a brush that is nearly dry. In all these Venice subjects the colouring is as brilliant as the hues of sunset, and the city is like a vision in the western sky, a city of crimson, gold, violet, and vermilion, floating over a sea of emerald. The real power of these sketches is in the skies, which are generally possible. The rest is not possible.

10. *Sketches in water-colour on white paper.*—This may be separated into two subdivisions. In one of them the work in pencil is intentionally hard, decided, and visible to the end ; in the other it is faint and purposely overpowered by the water-colour. For instance, in a study of Vesuvius from Naples, firmly drawn throughout in hard pencil, the water-colour work is carried very far in the mountain, and in some buildings of the foreground, but the rest is left frankly in pencil. On the other hand, there are two superb studies of Tivoli, in which the pencil has been used as little as possible, so that it becomes invisible under the broad energetic washes. These Tivoli subjects are remarkably fine examples of Turner's skill in pure transparent water-colour, the lights of which are all reserved in the white paper. He disliked the employment of body-colour in principle, though he used it freely when the

paper itself would not supply the light. There is a grand energetic study of the Campagna, with snowy mountains in the distance. The foreground is yellow, with violent marks of the brush-handle, and also of the artist's thumb, all proving that he was in a state of high excitement. Another of the Campagna, with a foreground of red and dark green, is carried farther in colour than most studies of this class. A third of these Campagna subjects may be mentioned for its extreme delicacy of tone ; it shows the meanders of the Tiber and a fortified bridge. The same bridge supplied subjects for several rapid pencil sketches on white paper. If the reader cares to see admirable examples of extreme economy of labour and paint in water-colour, he should study Turner's fishes on white paper, his perch, tench, and trout, drawn with the pencil and coloured with a wondrously small allowance of colour, but most brilliantly. Turner made fine studies of birds on the same principle, the markings of the plumage as elaborate as in Bewick, but always very light and open.

The above classification of Turner's studies from Nature will be found to include most of them, as he became addicted to certain habits of work, and remained faithful to them, at certain periods, long enough for the production of studies in sets and series. My classification does not, however, pretend to be exhaustive : I know that there are studies by Turner which it does not comprehend : but it is comprehensive enough to meet the reader's needs without wearying his patience. A few words remain to be said about the relation of these studies to Nature itself.

Turner differed from most landscape-painters in his condition of mind in the presence of Nature. The ordinary landscape-painter is truthful in his studies—truthful at least, so far as the illusions of an artist will allow him; but he often permits himself some poetical *rêverie* in the studio. Turner may have tried also to be truthful as a raw beginner; but the work of his maturity in the presence of Nature is true to nothing but his own emotions. There is a passage of Mr. Ruskin on this subject which I will quote with the ungracious intention of expressing dissent from it: 'Turner's decision came chiefly of his truthfulness; it was because he meant always to be true, that he was able always to be bold. And you will find that you may gain his courage if you will maintain his fidelity.' About the decision of Turner there cannot be two opinions, it is as evident as the decision of Napoleon, and as wonderful; but it did not come of truthfulness, it was not due to any fidelity to what he saw: it was due, on the contrary, to his audacious preference of his own fancies to the facts of the external world. There can be no doubt that Turner passionately enjoyed the beauty of the world, and deeply felt the influence of its sublimity, but he cared no more about the truth than Victor Hugo cares. We have already seen what 'Turnerian Topography' really was in our analysis of Kilchurn, and it is unnecessary to say more about it here except that nobody can place the slightest trust in the topographic fidelity of any sketch of Turner's. Now in studies of landscape, true topography and accurate drawing are inseparable. If the drawing is accurate, true topography will come of itself, and the absence of

topography in Turner's work is associated with a reckless inaccuracy in design.

Passing now from drawing to colour, let me explain what Turner's colouring was and was not. It was not an imitation of Nature except in certain studies, chiefly of still life, done very conscientiously for discipline. It was really a long series of experiments on the play of colours themselves. Here is an anecdote in illustration of his conception of colouring. He was staying once in a friend's house at Knockholt, where there were three children. The late Mr. Cristall, a friend of Mr. Samuel Palmer, was also a guest at Knockholt at the same time, and he witnessed the following incident, which he afterwards narrated to Mr. Palmer. Turner had brought a drawing with him of which the distance was already carefully outlined, but there was no material for the nearer parts. One morning, when about to proceed with this drawing, he called in the children as *collaborateurs* for the rest, in the following manner. He rubbed three cakes of water-colour, red, blue, and yellow, in three separate saucers, gave one to each child, and told the children to dabble in the saucers and then play together with their coloured fingers on his paper. These directions were gleefully obeyed, as the reader may well imagine. Turner watched the work of the thirty little fingers with serious attention, and after the dabbling had gone on for some time, suddenly called out, 'Stop!' He then took the drawing into his own hands, added imaginary landscape forms, suggested by the accidental colouring, and the work was finished. On another occasion, after dinner, he amused himself in arranging some

many-coloured sugar-plums on a dessert plate, and when disturbed in the operation by a question, said to the questioner, 'There! you have made me lose fifty guineas!' What relation had sugar-plums to landscape-painting? Simply this, that a landscape might have been afterwards invented in the same colour-arrangement. The sugar-plums would have been disguised in landscape forms in Turner's arbitrary way. Without wishing to prove too much by a couple of anecdotes,* I do think that every candid reader will agree with me that we have here a mind seeking colour combinations *for themselves*, without reference to the truth of Nature.

Many of Turner's studies have convinced me that this condition of mind, as a colourist, was habitual with him. The drawings for the 'Rivers of France' are glaringly false in colour, considered with reference to Nature, and the later drawings of Venice are outrageous; but if we look upon them as simple experiments in the juxtaposition of hues we shall understand them better. I am familiar enough with French rivers, under all natural effects, but I never yet saw one of their bridges dashed with the Turnerian vermilion. The plain truth is, that when Turner thought that a streak of vermilion or a blot of cobalt would help the brilliance of his drawing he set it there, as a jeweller sets a red stone or a blue one.

Another result of examining Turner's studies is that we see both the extent of his knowledge and the limits of it; we see especially his independent power of dis-

* These anecdotes may be relied upon. They were kindly communicated to me by Mr. Samuel Palmer.

covery. The fourth volume of De Saussure's great original book, 'Voyages dans les Alpes,' was published in 1796, with many engravings. De Saussure was rich as well as learned, and employed, no doubt, the best engraving talent to be had at that time in Switzerland. The plates are large—so large that many of them are twice folded in a quarto volume; and they are engraved with much labour and care. They really do express the most perfect mountain-knowledge which had been attained up to the end of the eighteenth century. They really give evidence of much deeper mountain lore than any which had been attained by the old masters; but compare them with the incipient Alpine work of Turner, done in the first years of the succeeding century, and what are they? Nothing but old maps, in which defective outlines surround spaces filled with emptiness. Turner's drawings of the Alps, even the early ones, are as much beyond those engravings which the learned and admirable De Saussure approved and published, as Greek figure-sculpture was beyond Gothic. The evidence of Turner's knowledge is not less abundant and convincing than the evidence of his wilful inaccuracy. But although his studies prove that he knew much, they do not prove that he knew everything. He was not learned in sylvan lore. It is surprising that so great a landscape-painter should have studied forest scenery so little. He drew some trees elegantly, but clearly preferred buildings as subjects of study; and there is no evidence that he had the sylvan sense, the delight in forest scenery, which has animated the genuine sylvan painters, such as Theodore Rousseau, for example. This

may have been due to his passion for great spaces; he may have felt confined and imprisoned in the woods. But besides this, he took comparatively little interest in rustic subjects. There are painters now living—Hanoteau is one of them—whose knowledge of rustic material is much closer, more intimate, more affectionate than Turner's. With an immense and unwearied industry, Turner accumulated thousands and thousands of memoranda to increase his knowledge of what interested him, especially in the mountains, rivers, and cities of the Continent, and the coasts of his native island. Amidst all this wealth of gathered treasure his imagination reigned and revelled with a poet's freedom. With a knowledge of landscape vaster than any mortal ever possessed before him, his whole existence was a succession of dreams. Even the hardest realities of the external world itself, granite and glacier, could not awaken him; but he would sit down before them and sketch another dream, there, in the very presence of the reality itself. Notwithstanding all the knowledge and all the observation which they prove, the interest of Turner's twenty thousand sketches is neither topographic nor scientific, but entirely psychological. It is the soul of Turner that fascinates the student, and not the material earth.

There are a few little details and anecdotes about Turner's practice as an artist which I have thought it better not to scatter through the volume, as they illustrate each other when taken together. The instrument he most commonly used in sketching was the lead-pencil. A friend of his, travelling in the Jura, came to an inn

where Turner had entered his name in the visitors' book, and, to make sure of the painter's identity, asked the innkeeper what sort of a man he was. 'A rough, clumsy man,' was the answer; 'and you may know him by this—*he has always a pencil in his hand.*' When sketching from nature in the Val d'Aosta with Mr. Munro, Turner was vexed with himself for having used colour instead of the pencil, with which (as he observed) he would have got much more in the time. Mr. Cyrus Redding, who saw Turner at work, speaks of the roughness of his sketches, which were in pencil, and remarks that many of his finest pictures were painted from rough pencil memoranda. There is, indeed, quite a special science or art of taking memoranda, which Turner thoroughly understood. A painter who is conversant with the materials of nature, can paint from very slight memoranda, if only they are of the right kind. Mr. Redding gives us another interesting scrap of information about Turner's way of making a sketch. 'He sketched the bridge, but appeared, from changing his position several times, as if he had tried more than one sketch, or could not please himself as to the best point.' It is probable that the real explanation of this would be that Turner collected into one and the same sketch a good deal of material which lay scattered around him in various directions, for he never troubled himself about drawing a scene as it appears from a single point of view. Mr. Redding speaks also of the confused nature of Turner's memoranda, taken on paper not bigger than a sheet of letter-paper. The only instance of his painting directly from nature in oil-colour occurs in some sketches

on canvas done at Richmond in his boat. There are about forty of these studies.

An interesting detail about his taste in scenery is that he declared he had 'never seen so many natural beauties in so limited an extent of country as he saw in the vicinity of Plymouth.' He was especially pleased with Mount Edgecumbe. Though rarely communicative about his impressions in the presence of nature, Turner once talked with a Mr. Rose, of Jersey, about scenes which he had visited; but Mr. Rose, unluckily, did not make a memorandum of his observations. Turner mentioned the Fall of Foyers in Scotland, the Pyrenees, and the French river Rance, which he recommended as rich in picturesque scenes.

CHAPTER X.

Rivalry with Wilson.—The Bay of Baiæ.—The Rivers of England.—Provincial Antiquities.—England and Wales.—The Ports of England.—The 'Cologne.' — Works from sketches by others. — Separate plates.—Transactions with Cooke.—Pictures exhibited in 1827.

IN the year 1822 Turner had a scheme which may be mentioned as an illustration of his character, both because it exhibits his love of important enterprises and because it shows that tendency to put himself in direct rivalry with deceased artists of reputation which, through life, was one of the peculiarities of his ambition. He had a conversation in the month of June with Messrs. Hurst and Robinson, successors of the well-known Alderman Boydell, in the course of which they encouraged him to have an important plate engraved from one of his pictures, by promising that if he undertook this at his own risk, and sold copies of the engraving to no one but themselves for the space of two years, they would take five hundred impressions. In a letter, dated June 28th, 1822, Turner enters into this plan, and proposes to combine it with a scheme of his own, which was to issue four important plates from his pictures, to place himself as a painter in rivalry with Wilson, and at the same time to place the engraver whom he would employ

in rivalry with Woollett. The letter is clearer and more business-like than many of his compositions; but there is one of his curious phrases which, at first sight, does not seem very intelligible. He says: 'The pictures of ultimate sale I shall be content with.' What are 'pictures of ultimate sale,' and why is Turner content with them? The answer, I imagine, must be that he was to take his chance of selling the pictures ultimately if he painted them for the present purpose of being engraved. Turner mentions 'four subjects to bear up with'—namely, 'Niobe, Ceyx, Cyledon, and Phaeton.' These are all well-known works by Wilson. By 'Ceyx' Turner means the *Ceyx and Alcyone*, and by 'Cyledon' he means the *Celadon and Amelia*. It is interesting to note that he speaks of both Wilson and Woollett as 'powerful antagonists,' and says: 'If we fall, we fall by contending with giant strength.' This is clear evidence that, when quite in his maturity Turner looked up to Wilson instead of considering him an inferior, and that his own project of contending against him was accompanied by certain misgivings. He proposed, as a first picture, either his *Hannibal* or the *Morning of the Chase;* and his calculation was that, with the pictures still to be painted, the whole project might be realised in five or six years. He expressly excepted the *Carthage* from a possible list. The plan was never realised; and it is said that Messrs. Hurst and Robinson offended Turner by trying to bargain with him for the two *Carthage* pictures at a time when his own price was a thousand guineas each.

In that year, 1822, the prices received by Turner for

his water-colours were not very considerable. He got eight guineas each for the *Colne*, *Rochester*, and *Norham*, and £85 for three drawings on the Rhine. But the importance of a work to the artist himself is not to be measured by the price paid for it. That drawing of Norham Castle is said to have been always regarded by the artist as the turning-point of his success.

Nothing of importance was exhibited in 1822, but in the following year a great picture appeared at the Academy, *The Bay of Baiæ.* The full title in the Academy Catalogue was *the Bay of Baiæ, with Apollo and the Sybil.*

'Waft me to sunny Baiæ's shore.'

Although connected with the name of a locality, this picture really belongs almost as completely to the realms of imagination as those pure inventions with fanciful titles which amused or perplexed the critics. It is a poetical scene, with a fine expanse of land and water, the land scenery being more than usually elaborate and full of rich invention. The gay delight in the beauty of 'sunny Baiæ,' which is expressed in the motto, is visible also in the painting, which has been executed with evident enjoyment. This is really a picture after Turner's own heart, with plenty of light, plenty of space for the eye to wander over, endless detail to amuse and occupy his inventive faculty, and just a bit of mythology to take the subject out of the common world. Besides, although the Bay of Baiæ is a real locality, it has been celebrated long ago in the Horatian verse, and is therefore sacred to the classic muse. The Cumæan Sibyl,

who is seated with Apollo under the shade of the tall pine-trees, is famous in old poetry and in the art of the Italian Renaissance. Notwithstanding his lack of scholarship, one of Turner's strongest characteristics was a taste for associating his work with places and personages of historical or legendary interest, and there were certain stories of antiquity which took root in his mind very strongly. That about the Cumæan Sibyl, beloved by Apollo, was one of them. It suited Turner by its sad poetical ending; for if the Sibyl had yielded there would only have been an addition to the *liaisons* of the gods, and she would have lived on joyously in perpetual youth, but being obdurate she slowly decayed and finally became only a voice. There is no telling what analogies may have been suggested to Turner's mind by the story of the Sibyl, but it is quite possible that he may have followed out some analogies for himself, in his own obscure way.

The picture was painted lightly and easily, with a degree of refinement far surpassing the early work of the master; but it was not soundly painted as to the materials, for the delicate colouring has not stood well everywhere. In some parts it is cracked, in others the relations of the most aërial tints have evidently somehow gone wrong; though what they were, as the painter laid them, it is not now possible to determine.

In 1824 Turner exhibited no oil picture either at the Royal Academy or the British Institution. He seems to have been much occupied at this time of his life by drawing for the engravers. His 'Rivers of England' was brought out in that year by W. B. Cooke. These

engravings were in mezzotint by Reynolds, Lupton, Bromley, Jay, Phillips, and Charles Turner. The title given to this publication was far too comprehensive for what it really included, as some of the most important amongst English rivers are omitted. There is no illustration of the Thames, the Mersey, or the Severn; whilst there are subjects on such little known streams as the Eamont, the Coquet, the Colne, and the Okement. The truth is, that the 'Rivers of England' can only be considered as a small portfolio of subjects which happen to be mere streams, and several of them are so treated as to be rather illustrations of buildings than of rivers. The noble *Brougham Castle* would come grandly in a collection to illustrate mediæval castles, and the *Kirkstall Abbey* might belong to a portfolio of ecclesiastical architecture. The sixteen subjects are treated with careful attention to light and shade, of which some of them are remarkably fine examples.

In 1825 Turner was still actively occupied with his publications, or with illustrations to publications undertaken by others. We have already mentioned his journey to Scotland in 1818, when he got materials for the 'Provincial Antiquities.' This publication did not appear until 1826, when it was published in two volumes, with descriptive letterpress by Sir Walter Scott. Mr. Thomson, of Duddingstone, drew some of the illustrations. A much more important work employed Turner at this time, and at intervals for twelve years afterwards —namely, the 'England and Wales,' including towns, remarkable buildings, and beautiful scenery. Altogether, the work includes ninety-nine subjects which were pub-

lished, and two of which the plates were never finished. More than thirty towns are illustrated in the series, and more than twenty castles, as well as many abbeys and priories, and two cathedrals—Ely and Durham. There are several marine subjects, and four lakes are included —namely, Keswick, Llanberis, Ulleswater, and Windermere. Important, however, as the work unquestionably is, it cannot be considered, in any complete sense, representative of England and Wales. It was evidently not conceived as a whole, but merely got together from materials which Turner happened to possess in his portfolios. An artist might illustrate England and Wales in a hundred plates, but he could do it only by carefully selecting subjects representative of whole classes—a hamlet, a village, a town, a city, a cathedral, a country church, an old hall, a castle, and so on, amongst the works of men ; and a lake, a stream, a river, a mountain, etc., amongst the works of nature. That would be the illustration of the country by typical subjects ; but you find nothing of the kind in this important work of Turner's. The subjects seem to be chosen by pure accident. There is a plethora of castles and abbeys, and only one mountain, drawn for its own sake—namely, Penmaen Mawr ; whilst we have not a single example of English forest scenery, nor even of an English trout stream. A foreigner, glancing over the engravings, might admire the talents of the artists, but would get a most imperfect idea of England and Wales. This is only one amongst several examples of Turner's too comprehensive titles. They were generally too comprehensive or ambitious, as we have seen already in 'The Rivers of

England,' which is as if one were to call half-a-dozen cockboats the British fleet. At a later period Turner called a more important work 'The Rivers of France;' but you may look through it from beginning to end without finding a single subject either on the Rhone or the Garonne.

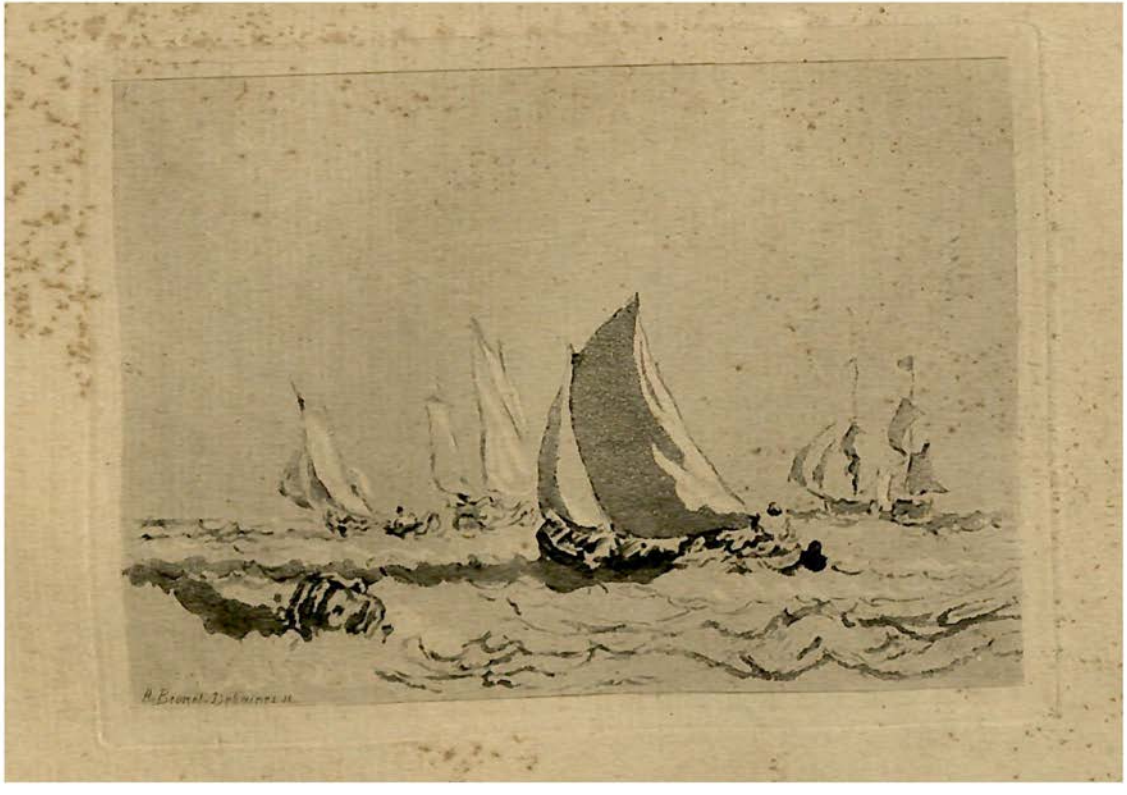
The 'England and Wales' series occupies an intermediate position between Turner's early topographic work, and that in which he drew in complete independence of the natural scene. Too many of the subjects were taken from definite buildings and places to permit the artist a quite absolute liberty. He could not make the cathedrals of Ely and Durham mere piles of imaginary architecture, like that which he composed for his pictures of ancient Carthage; and it was necessary that Blenheim House should be clearly recognisable by persons who take an interest in historic habitations. It is impossible to look over the index to the 'England and Wales' without seeing at a glance that, from the business point of view, it is a continuation of the topographic labours of the artist's youth, that the appeal to public interest is far more dependent upon locality than upon landscape character. At the same time Turner put as much art into his subjects as he possibly could, and elevated some prosy English towns into the region of Turnerian poetry. He was by no means over-paid for his labours, as he received only twenty-five guineas for each of his drawings and thirty proofs of the engraving. The drawings have since risen in the market to eight or ten times their original value. In 1824 Mr. Tomkinson had given Turner fifty guineas for two drawings in continuation of

his 'Southern Coast,' so that this price seems to have been his rule about that period of his life.

In 1826 Turner issued the prospectus of his series, 'The Ports of England,' a prospectus so unskilfully worded that it must have been Turner's own work. It begins as follows: 'Under the patronage and dedicated, with permission, to His Most Gracious Majesty George the Fourth. PORTS OF ENGLAND, from original drawings by J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A. To be engraved in highly-finished mezzotints by Thomas Lupton. Size of the plates, 9 inches by 6½, and to be printed on small folio. Price of the work: Prints, 8*s.* 6*d.*; proofs, 12*s.* 6*d.*; proofs on India paper, 14*s.*'

Anybody would conclude from this announcement that the whole work was to be had for 8*s.* 6*d.*; but as the artist further explains that it was to be issued in parts, and that twelve parts were to form a volume, and says that at the completion of each volume handsome letterpress was to be published, which leads us to infer that there were to be several volumes, the bewildered reader soon begins to doubt the possibility of getting so limitless a work for such a limited sum of money. Not a word is said about the expected extent of the undertaking; it might have gone on, for anything the reader was told to the contrary, until all the ports of England had been illustrated in their minutest details. The space which ought to have been occupied by a clear explanation of the project, was taken up with appeals to the patriotic sentiments which might induce Englishmen to become subscribers. The style and language resemble those of a civic speech-maker when he proposes a naval

toast. Notwithstanding this magniloquent call upon national feeling in others, the artist's own enthusiasm for his subject was not sufficient to sustain him through prolonged labours. The work never got beyond twelve plates, bearing about the same relation to the ports of England that a former imperfect series had borne to her rivers. The plates were re-published in 1856 by Mr. Gambart, with letterpress by Mr. Ruskin, who observes that Liverpool, Shields, Yarmouth, and Bristol are absent from the series, whilst it includes some of the least important of English watering-places. There is a slight difference in title between Turner's prospectus and Mr. Ruskin's publication. Turner had called his work the 'Ports,' Mr. Ruskin, or Mr. Gambart, decided to call it the 'Harbours' of England. The size of the plates is not precisely what Turner at first intended them to be; they are generally from half an inch to an inch longer. He got over the artistic difficulty of dealing with piers and rows of houses, by giving great importance to turbulent seas crowded with ships and boats in motion. The ships were especially useful, because their sails could be made to hide an uninteresting town, or break a monotonous front of cliff. But this is only one of many artifices to which Turner had recourse in this series in order to overcome the natural untowardness of his subjects. I do not know any connected set of his works in which he made so much use of the weather. This may have been partly in sympathy with sailors, who, whether in port or at sea, are always thinking about the wind; but it was probably much more because he found it convenient to veil what was uninteresting, and exhibit to



better advantage the more available portions of his subjects by means of the resources which bad weather placed at his disposal. Besides this, he had great spaces that wanted furnishing, and he furnished them in the upper parts of his drawings by means of rain-clouds, and in the lower by means of waves and shipping. These plates constitute an excellent set of examples in the art of furnishing; even the old Dutchmen, who were very clever in that department, never went so far. Take, for instance, the view of Deal. The plate contains about fifty-six square inches of engraved surface; in this the view of Deal measures five and a half inches long by half an inch high, consequently it occupies two square inches and three quarters of engraved surface. The foreground is composed of two big waves with the trough of the sea between them, and there is a group of fishing-boats to the left, which, were it not for the comfort of knowing that Deal was within sight, might just as well be in the midst of the German Ocean. And please observe that this is not called a sea subject, but a *port*. Here is the most serious objection to the treatment adopted, that it is not in poetic harmony with the title. Instead of feeling the comfort of sheltered havens, where ships may quietly ride at anchor whilst the sea is raging outside, we are kept tossing uncomfortably on tumultuous waves amidst a jumble of pitching boats and flapping sails. So it is in nine subjects out of twelve. In the remaining three (the Plymouth, Falmouth, and Scarborough) we really feel in port. The Scarborough, judiciously placed by Mr. Ruskin at the close of the series, is like peaceful music; it is even more restful than any music, for it does not

move and pass, but quietly *is* what it is, and stays with us. Painting may even excel nature in the expression of repose, for in nature there is no perfect rest, and not for long will the evening light linger on the castled cliff, or the 'old grey church on the shore.'

Turner could paint repose admirably when he liked, and his great picture in the Exhibition of 1826 was a magnificent example of it. I well remember the profound impression which I received from that noble work on seeing it for the first time in 1857, at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. The title was simply, *Cologne—the Arrival of a Packet-boat—Evening*, but there were such unity and serenity in the work, and such a glow of light and colour, that it seemed like a window opened upon the land of the ideal, where the harmonies of things are more perfect than they have ever been in the common world. I remember reading, with a young man's indignation, a stupid criticism of this picture by Monsieur W. Burger, in which he declared that everything in the picture was uniformly coloured like the yolk of an egg. He would have admired it more, very likely, if he could have seen it on the walls of the Royal Academy, when Turner had temporarily hidden its glowing light and colour under a wash of lamp-black, in order that it might not spoil the effect of two portraits by Lawrence, between which it happened to be placed. 'Poor Lawrence,' he said, 'was so unhappy! It's only lamp-black. It will all wash off after the Exhibition!' Was there ever a more exquisitely beautiful instance of self-sacrifice? It is not as if Turner had been indifferent to fame, for he was anxiously careful about everything

that could affect his reputation, and here we see him voluntarily exposing himself to harsh criticism for having painted a foul, ill-coloured sky, when that very sky was one of the most splendid pieces of harmonious colouring in the whole range of landscape art. Unluckily for our estimate of Turner's unselfishness, there are counter-anecdotes about his eagerness to crush his neighbours by heightening the intensity of his colours.

I need hardly observe that M. Burger's assertion about the uniform colouring, like yolk of egg, is due, first, to his national antagonism to English art, and, secondly, to his personal incapacity to see variety in colour. The *Cologne*, though harmonious, is not uniform in its hues. There is not only a golden glow in it, there are exquisite passages of rose and violet in the tender transitions of its evening lights and shadows. The picture was well described by an excellent writer in the *Manchester Guardian:*

'It represents,' he said, 'the Rhine under the walls of Cologne, with the "Treckschuyt" arriving, and taking up its berth for landing the passengers. The river is placid, and scarce rippled by the slowly-moving "Treckschuyt," as she makes her way past the picturesque craft beside her. On the right are the walls, with a tower and spire breaking their line, and running up to a postern, backed by a taller tower. In the foreground some balks of timber, and the spider-like arms of a couple of those fishing-nets, which tourists by the Rhine and Moselle know so well, reflected in the wet sand, and casting their evening shadows as well as their reflexions. In the distance you catch a glimpse of the distant bridge of boats. The sky is being rapt through that rosy change which

precedes the dying of twilight into dark. The sun is not seen in the picture, but a cloud lies between it and the spectator; and from behind this the broad-slanting rays strike on town and tower, and shoot down to the stream, flinging on its unruffled face and on the rounded sides of the "Treckschuyt" the shadows of intercepting edifices; while from the lighted water a glow strikes back into the cool violet shadows cast by wall and steeple, and fills them with reflected light.'

This picture was sold at Mr. Wadmore's sale, in 1854, for two thousand guineas to Mr. John Naylor; and Mr. Ruskin afterwards sent a pang of regret through the whole art-world of England by announcing that it had been utterly destroyed in a railway accident; a calamity which in reality happened to some other pictures, not by Turner, but belonging to the same owner.

The incessant industry of the great painter still applied itself abundantly to the work of book illustration. In those days photography was not actively supplying artists with material, which, however imperfect it may be, is, at least, impartial, and not distorted by passing through another mind. In those days a landscape-painter must either travel to the places he had to illustrate, or else do what he could with material supplied by others, such material being usually sketches rather than studies. It is always unsatisfactory to work from a sketch made by another person; for a sketch is a selection, and we cannot select by deputy. If the traveller who made it was an artist, he altered nature to suit the needs of his own individual talent; and if he was an amateur, he may have missed important points from

imperfectly trained observation. In either case, the material is scarcely to be relied upon. The sketches of travellers—of African travellers, for instance—are constantly made up into showy book illustrations by clever men who know how to make the best of any material; but in these cases the work so done is usually anonymous, and the clever men who do it have not to maintain a great and peculiar artistic reputation. Turner was in a different position. He could not simply mend, complete, amplify, a sketch in its own way, he was compelled by his own fame to transform it into something entirely different, into something that the public might at once recognise as a Turner. He did this by giving skies and water of his own invention, by composing all movable things according to his own taste, and by drawing the rest over again with Turnerian alterations and exaggerations in the recognised Turnerian mannerism. That we may not have to recur again to this subject, I will mention, in this place, the principal works in which Turner made use of sketches taken by others. They began with Hakewill's 'Picturesque Tour of Italy, published by Murray in 1820, from Mr. Hakewill's camera-obscura sketches. In 1825 Murray's octavo edition of Byron, in eleven volumes, included several illustrations by Turner, some of which were from sketches by Mr. Allison; and in 1833 appeared Finden's 'Illustrations to Byron,' including works by Turner from sketches by Reinagle, Allison, and Page. A complete edition of Byron's works, with Moore's Biography, appeared in seventeen volumes in 1834; and Turner contributed to it the same number of illustrations, several of

which were of places that he had never seen—such as Athens, Parnassus, Scio, St. Sophia, the Plain of Troy, and Corinth—the materials being supplied by Page, Barry, and Little. But by far the greatest of Turner's undertakings in working up other men's memoranda was the series of his illustrations to the Bible. He never visited Palestine, yet illustrated Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Mount Lebanon, the Dead Sea, and many other places, his providers being Mr. Barry, Sir A. Edmonstone, Sir Robert Kerr Porter, Messrs. R. Cockrell, C. J. Rich, J. G. Wilkinson, Gally Knight, Major Felix, and the Rev. R. Master. There is also a set of views in India—seven in number—chiefly among the Himalaya mountains, from drawings by Lieutenant White. I need hardly observe that the mere variety of the hands which supplied Turner with all these materials is in itself a source of difficulty and embarrassment. Artists of the present day are much happier with photographs, whose peculiarities and imperfections are always the same, and may be thoroughly understood and regularly allowed for.

To all these various publications, which were spreading the name of Turner more and more amongst the public, may be added the plates, published separately and at irregular intervals, from the beginning of the century till the artist's death. Some of those were in mezzotint by Lupton, Charles Turner, and others; but the majority were in that modern style of landscape engraving which is familiar to every reader, and which, with all its faults, unquestionably marks the highest point of perfection attained hitherto in the *complete* interpretation of land-

scape art on metal. It is not pure burin-work, but a mixed style, including a great deal of etching, much work with the point, and not a little ruling; but, taken as a whole, in the hands of the marvellously skilful men who used it —such men as Miller, Cooke, Goodall, Jeavons, Heath, Higham, Allen, Willmore, and Wallis—it interprets landscape painting more *completely* than any other method. Mezzotint can render the tones of light and shade with unsurpassable accuracy, but it is never so lucid and luminous as engraving, and consequently its effects of atmosphere can never be so pure. Independent etching, as I have frequently had occasion to observe elsewhere, may suggest delicate distinctions of tone, but does not so surely render them as engraving does, and is therefore not so well adapted for the interpretation of skies. The influence of Turner upon engraving might supply a subject for a separate essay. He educated a whole school of engravers, and a very remarkable school it was; he educated them first by showing them the most subtle and delicate tonality in his pictures, and afterwards by a strict supervision of their work as it proceeded. His best qualities as a teacher came from his union of extreme delicacy with force; his worst fault, his most evil influence, came from his reckless desire for brilliance, which made him always ready to destroy the tranquillity of a plate if he thought that it did not look effective enough. This was the same spirit, acting in another direction, which made him so determined to make his pictures brilliant, at all costs, on the walls of the Academy; but there he could achieve it with the help of chrome, and cobalt, and vermilion. On a dull plate he had no resource but that

of glittering lights, which he scattered in profusion 'like stars on the sea.'

Turner's transactions with his engravers, and with the publishers of his prints, were not always perfectly agreeable. Amongst other evidences of this, we have a long letter from Mr. W. B. Cooke, dated the first of January, 1827, and proving by its contents that the hopeful and cheerful associations of New-year's Day had not power to overcome the engraver's sense of injury and wrong. The facts appear to have been as follows: Turner agreed to make the South Coast drawings for £7 10*s.* each, and for the first four numbers of the work that was what he received. Afterwards an agreement was made, by which Turner was to receive £13 2*s.* 6*d.* for each drawing in a future 'Coast.' He seems to have understood that this increase of price was to have a retroactive effect, that he was to receive a balance on the drawings already done and paid for—drawings which belonged to the first division of the work called the 'Southern Coast.' This Mr. W. B. Cooke did not understand to be their agreement at all, and the result was a tempest, the great painter loudly declaring that he would have his terms, and would oppose the work by doing another 'Coast.' Mr. Cooke admitted that he had agreed to pay ten guineas for each drawing after the fourth number, and affirmed that he had faithfully adhered to this agreement; which must have been true, as he had Turner's receipts to prove it. At the time this quarrel broke out the work had been finished upwards of six months, and the painter had had his money. It is evident by a quotation from a previous letter that the cor-

respondents had not been on quite pleasant terms before. 'Do you imagine,' wrote Turner, 'I shall go to John o'Groat's House for the same sum I receive for the Southern part?' Mr. Cooke complains at the end of his letter that he regrets the time he has bestowed in endeavouring to convince Turner calmly, since he had met with such hostile treatment in return.

The clear result of the correspondence is, that there had been three distinct prices. The first agreement was to give Turner £7 10*s.* each for the drawings of the Southern Coast; the second agreement was to pay him ten guineas for each drawing after the fourth number; the third agreement was to pay him twelve and a half guineas each for drawings to belong to a future coast series of the same kind from the northern scenery of Great Britain, since John o'Groat's House is in a very northerly situation. Turner's conduct in the matter is one of the most singular instances of confusion in a matter of business that can be imagined. Stated plainly, it amounts to this: that, on the strength of the third agreement, he applied the terms of the second agreement to the first. He quotes Mr. Cooke's promise to give twelve guineas and a half for the future coast drawings as a reason why there should be a balance still due to him —a balance of *two* guineas—on the earliest drawings of all. There is no reason to suspect Turner of dishonesty; it is a case of mental confusion in a grasping temperament. Avaricious and grasping people often make mistakes in pecuniary transactions, but it may be observed that a sure instinct always preserves them from making such mistakes against themselves. The transaction has

an interest for posterity in the light it throws on Turner's prices. He is fifty years old; he has been a Royal Academician for twenty years; he has painted many important pictures, including three or four unquestionable masterpieces; and he is haggling and quarrelling with an engraver about a miserable balance of forty shillings a-piece on some of his best drawings! He looks with the same eagerness after a guinea or two wherever he thinks he can establish a claim to them. Cooke declares that Turner gave him a drawing of *Neptune's Trident* as a present; but Turner demands the return of it, and charges two guineas for the loan. This appears almost inconceivably mean; but we must remember two things which may partially excuse Turner: first, that his mind was subject to confused changes and irregularities about all transactions from its own want of method and clearness; and, secondly, that to charge for the loan of a drawing was an old habit with him, contracted in early life, when it had been one of the chief sources of his income as a drawing-master. He fancied he had lent the drawing, and charged for it as a matter of course, just as a boat-keeper at Richmond will make you pay when you have had one of his boats.

Let us return to the exhibited pictures. There is an attempt at wit, by the mixture of incongruous nautical and artistic ideas, in the title of the finest picture on the list for 1827—*Now for the Painter!—Passengers going on Board;* the word *painter* here meaning a rope, though, seeing how few people understand nautical terms, the majority of the public would, of course, take it to mean *le peintre* rather than *la corde.* This was

Turner's fun, and it is not at all impossible that he may have intended a little bit of self-glorification at the same time. 'Now for the painter! Now, see what a real painter, a *pictor eximius*, can do! You have been looking at the attempts of my weaker brethren; now it is *my* turn, so just look at *me!*' Whatever may have been the defects of our hero, bashfulness and false modesty were not amongst them. Like a certain famous artist who died recently, and who calmly entitled himself 'the master painter of Ornans,' Turner believed in his own powers, as we should probably believe also if we possessed them. The title was originally suggested by one of Callcott's, *Letting go the Painter.* The picture afterwards became the property of Mr. Naylor, and was exhibited, along with his other Turners, in the Art Treasures at Manchester in 1857. It was described at the time by the able writer in the *Manchester Guardian*, from whom I have already quoted; and I quote him again in the present instance because he wrote from a fresh impression. He says:

'The picture is by much the most powerful example of Turner's sea-painting here exhibited, and, indeed, one of the very finest seas we have ever seen from his hand. It shows what an immense advance he had by this time made upon the work of those days when Van de Velde furnished his ideal of marine painting. Here is liquidity and lustre, as well as true drawing of waves. His seas reflect, as well as rock, the craft that roll and pitch upon them as naturally as ever. We may see, too, how much larger and grander his ocean has grown—how much more awful in its expression of power is even

this quiet and harmless channel sea, than the storm-lashed surf which is grinding the *Minotaur* to splinters.'

The same writer had an interesting paragraph on another of the pictures exhibited in 1827—*Mortlake Terrace, Seat of William Moffat, Esq.—Summer Evening:*

'He had exhibited a picture of the same place the year before, with an effect of *Early Summer Morning*—both, probably, records of a happy day. The day that closed as this picture represents should have been a happy one. The broad light of the evening sun still lies upon the river, and casts the lengthening shadows of the limes over the golden sward, where a garden-chair and a portfolio speak of the artist who has just left the spot, and the gilded barges and glancing wherries tell of holiday-makers upon the river, and the dog has wakened from his doze in the sun to leap upon the parapet and bark at the passing boats. This dog is one of the often-quoted examples of Turner's reckless readiness of resource, and carelessness as to means of effect. There was no dog in this picture originally. Turner thought, or somebody suggested to him, that a dark object on the parapet would throw back the distance, and enhance the aerial effect of the whole picture. So Turner cut out this dog in black paper and stuck him on the wall, and, satisfied with the effect, either forgot how it was produced, or did not think it worth while to replace his paper dog with a painted one, and there the paper dog remains to this day.'

There is an instance, I believe, in one of his water-colours, of a glorious setting sun, which on examination turns out to be nothing but a common red wafer. I need scarcely observe that in such cases the adjunct,

from its harmony with its surroundings, and the *rôle* it is made to play, becomes just as much a part of the picture as if it were a pigment applied with the brush.

Amongst the pictures exhibited in 1827 was *Port Ruysdael.* It is scarcely necessary to observe that there is no such place as Port Ruysdael, yet Turner gave the title to two of his pictures; first to this, and at a much later period of his life to another, which was exhibited at the Academy in 1844. It is the later of these pictures which was etched for the *Portfolio* (it appeared in August, 1875), the original being in the National Gallery. In his note on that work, Mr. Wornum said, 'The *Port Ruysdael* of 1827 was of the same size (three feet high by four feet wide), and was bought by Mr. Elhanan Bicknell for three hundred guineas; it was sold at his sale many years afterwards, in 1863, for the large sum of £1995; proving to him, like many other of Turner's works, a very good investment for his family.' It is very probable that, besides the convenience of having a name of some sort for an imaginary seaport, Turner may have intended to honour the memory of his predecessor in art. He was not one of those artists whose high opinion of themselves prevents them from respecting others; on the contrary, he had a rather surprising degree of respect for several old masters whom we consider much inferior to him. He saw qualities in their works which were by no means easy to imitate, and he readily overlooked what our critical fastidiousness considers to be their defects. Very few modern landscape painters admire Ruysdael much. The continental critics are loud in his praise, of course, being always

ready to sing hymns of eulogy to any god who has his place on the artistic Olympus.

In 1828 Turner exhibited another of his Carthage pictures, *Dido directing the Equipment of the Fleet; or, the Morning of the Carthaginian Empire.* This picture was originally painted for Mr. Broadhurst, but is now in the Turner Collection of the National Gallery. It is simply one of those compositions of imaginary architecture, with water, in which the painter occasionally indulged himself. The same year he exhibited two pictures of marine subjects, much more within the range of our English tastes and sympathies, *East Cowes Castle*, with the regatta beating to windward, and the same place with the regatta starting from their moorings. His fourth picture that year was *Boccaccio relating the Tale of the Birdcage*, and it was with reference to this picture that I narrated, in one of the early chapters of this biography, an anecdote which Leslie told me in Turner's house in Queen Anne Street. Leslie accused him of imitating Stothard, which Turner at once admitted, saying that he wished he could paint like him, and calling him 'the Giotto of England.' The comparison, like all such comparisons, will not bear investigation; but it is interesting as an expression of Turner's admiration for a contemporary, and the confession that the picture was not original in manner may partly account for the fact that it is one of the painter's failures.

CHAPTER XI.

Journey to Italy, 1828.—The Polyphemus.—Death of Turner's father.—The illustrations to Rogers.—Scotland revisited, 1830.

TURNER went to Italy again in 1828, and we know by a letter from him to his friend Jones, the Academician, that he had spent nearly two months on the way, and in settling to work in Rome. The letter is dated October 13th, so it is probable that he left London in the latter half of August. He seems to have delayed most in the south of France, and to have suffered so much from the heat at Nismes and Avignon that it brought on temporary debility, relieved afterwards by sea-bathing when he reached the Mediterranean. There is an interesting paragraph in the letter about the scenery of the *Cornice*, with a pleasant bit of playfulness about Chantrey, whom Turner loved.

'Genoa, and all the sea-coast from Nice to Spezzia, is remarkably rugged and fine; so is Massa. Tell that fat fellow, Chantrey, that I did think of him *then* (but not the first or the last time), of the thousands he had made out of those marble craigs, which only afforded me a sour bottle of wine and a sketch: but he deserves everything which is good, though he did give me a fit of the spleen at Carrara.'

On the 6th of November he dates a letter to Chantrey from No. 12 Piazza Mignanelli, and begins as follows:

'MY DEAR CHANTREY,—I intended long before this (but you will say, fudge) to have written; but even now, very little information have I to give you in matters of art, for I have confined myself to the painting department at Corso; and having finished *one*, am about the second, and getting on with Lord E.'s, which I began the very first touch at Rome; but as the folk here talked that I would show them *not*, I finished a small three-feet-four to stop their gabbling: so now to business.'

The rest of the letter is occupied with accounts of other artists' doings, and there is a hit at Gibson's *Venus and Cupid.*

'The Venus is a sitting figure, with the Cupid in attendance; and if it had wings like a dove, to flee away and be at rest, the rest would not be the worse for the change.'

I have remarked elsewhere that we have seldom any materials from which to construct an account of Turner's artistic expeditions. He wrote few letters; he did not date his sketches, nor even always write upon them the names of the places where they were taken; he kept no journal of his travels, and he was almost invariably alone; so that the want of material from his own hand is not supplied by another. The glimpse that we get of him in Rome is interesting as a proof that he not only sketched but painted pictures there: he began one for 'Lord E.,' 'but as the folk here talked that I would show them *not*, I finished a small three-feet-four to stop their gabbling.' Here is evidence that he did not let people

see his works in an unfinished state; in which he was most wise. The preparations on a canvas may be intentionally just the opposite of the ultimate result; it is said that Cuyp's golden light was laid in with silvery grey, and that the finest flesh colour of a great Venetian was first prepared in green. The studio haunter comes and criticises; mentally, if not orally, he thinks, 'That sky is dreadfully cold in colour,' 'that flesh is ghastly:' the painter knows what he is thinking, and must either endure it in silent vexation, or else take the trouble to explain his processes, which seems as if he were apologising for what is really his own superiority of skill and knowledge. Turner had not the sort of temper either to bear with the criticism of Ignorance, or to excuse himself for offending it; so he bolted his door and worked in protected peace. He will throw a sop to Cerberus, a picture finished on purpose, and give the 'folk' 'a small three-feet-four to stop their gabbling.' By this he means a canvas measuring four feet by three, not such a very small size; and with these dimensions to guide us, we can fix upon the picture alluded to. It must have been the *View of Orvieto*, now in the National Gallery, which exactly measures four feet by three, and was exhibited at the Academy in 1830.*

We have a means of guessing the date of the painter's return to England. In the Academy Exhibition of 1829 there was a picture entitled *Messieurs les Voyageurs on*

* Mr. Wornum described it as a brilliant landscape, with a town in the distance, and women washing at a fountain in the foreground; but he said it was painted in Rome in 1829. This appears to be a mistake, as the letter to Chantrey was written early in November, 1828, and it speaks of the picture as already finished.

their return from Italy (par la diligence) in a Snowdrift upon Mount Tarra, 22nd of January, 1829. This was very probably a recollection of an incident witnessed by the artist at that place and time; the travellers are 'on their return from Italy,' and it is probable that Turner was amongst them.

All the results of this residence in Rome were not immediately visible; the impressions received there remained in Turner's memory, and afterwards ripened into two or three of his finest pictures. The more immediate results were the *View of Orvieto* and a composition entitled *Palestrina*, which was exhibited in 1830 with the following quotation from the painter's poem, the famous manuscript, 'Fallacies of Hope:'

> 'Or from yon mural rock, high-crown'd Præneste,
> Where, misdeeming of his strength, the Carthaginian stood,
> And marked, with eagle eye, Rome as his victim.'

Whilst painting pictures of more or less importance, Turner continued his minor labours of illustration. From 1828 to 1837 he contributed drawings to the 'Keepsake,' and in 1829 he made drawings of Fonthill for the 'Anniversary.' That year was a great one in the history of his art, for he exhibited the splendid Polyphemus picture, and also the *Loretto Necklace*, which, without being one of the greatest of his works, deserves mention both for its beauty and for an unfortunate change of intention. The title is attached to a little figure-incident in the foreground, a necklace given by a peasant to a girl who is seated by his side, Loretto being visible in the middle distance, on a hill, and the sea in the remote distance. The striking peculiarity of the

picture is a great tree, and Mr. Ruskin says of this: 'It has evidently been once a graceful stone-pine, of which the spreading head is still traceable at the top of the heavy mass; the lower foliage has been added subsequently, to the entire destruction of the composition.'

The great picture, *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, is a work of higher aim and of more unquestionable achievement. It has been very freely criticised, and it belongs to a class of compositions which may easily be pulled to pieces by matter-of-fact people; but the impression which it makes as a whole is an impression of extraordinary splendour and power, and it is mere folly to weaken our own sense of its magnificence by a sceptical analysis of its materials, and of the sources from which the artist may possibly have derived them. The ships, it is said, are not such as the ancient Greeks ever used; to which it may be answered, that it does not signify in the least whether they are archæologically authentic or not. Any schoolboy, in these days, can ascertain in half an hour, from modern books of reference, the precise truth about some special matter of this kind, with an accuracy far surpassing that of either Shakespeare or Paul Veronese. It has been said that the properties in the picture remind one of the opera, which is rather a compliment than the reverse, for the last time I saw an ancient Greek ship come sailing on an opera stage in a ballet, it was as carefully archæological as a picture by Alma Tadema. The artifices of composition are obvious enough; the ships arranged to the right, so as not to interfere with the trail of sun reflection on the water; the advancing rocks, to bring the forms of the land

down picturesquely to the sea; the mountainous shore, for the statuesque figure of Polyphemus to recline upon; the high deck of the ship's poop, as a pedestal for Ulysses to stand upon—all is artificial; all except the sky, which is a reminiscence of pure nature, and so magnificent that it would be hard to find its equal amongst the most glorious triumphs of art. And yet, in order that there might not be a too absolute dissonance between the naturalness of the sky and the artificial character of the other material in the picture, Turner has recalled human beliefs and the old Grecian time, even amongst the evanescent splendours of the clouds; for he who looks at that rising sun may dimly discern, through the mists of this world's atmosphere, the swift horses of Apollo as they begin eagerly their course in heaven. The confines, too, of earth and sky are purposely mingled in the morning mist; and the Cyclops himself is made so grandly vague by it, that we hardly know if he be an earthly giant on his island hill in the Ægean sea, or an angry god obscure in the clouds of Olympus.

We have to return now from the dreams of Turnerian art to the sad realities of an existence which did not escape from the usual sorrows of human life. Turner's father died in 1830, and in him the painter lost his nearest friend and the only relation with whom he kept up any intercourse. After this date, then, we are to think of Turner as a singularly isolated human creature, dependent upon a very few friends for such society as he possessed, and having no home, if by 'home' we understand anything more than a material building of

bricks, with the wooden furniture inside it. The loss to the painter must have been inexpressible, for he loved his father deeply in his own quiet, undemonstrative way. The old man had given up his barber's shop more than thirty years before, and had lived with his son ever since, finding many little occupations, and making himself useful in various ways, either by acting as keeper of his son's gallery in Queen Anne Street, or by stretching and preparing canvases, or by looking after the bit of garden at Twickenham, and the frugal household affairs. It requires little stretch of imagination to realise the tranquil, affectionate life which father and son led together during those long years, and the dreadful void which the old man's departure must have left in the daily existence of his son. No more to find him in the garden; no more to eat the simple meal with him; no more to have him there in an evening when the long day's work was over, to tell him of professional successes, of growing fortune, and extending fame; never again to be encouraged by his confidence, or rewarded by his fatherly joy and pride; and instead of all these solaces and consolations to find only vacancy, an empty chair, a chilling solitude, was not that enough to pain a heart less tender than that of Turner, which, if it loved seldom, loved ever faithfully and well? Remember that the old man had always, from the first, done all he could to help his gifted child, and nothing whatever to hinder him; that, instead of being alarmed by Heaven's great gift of genius, and hostile to it, as mediocrity so often is, he had welcomed it with joy and gladness, and watched it as a gardener might watch some marvellous, miraculous flower, and protected

it against the hardships of the common world, and watered it with all necessary knowledge. It was he who had first said, 'William is to be a painter!' And before he was laid in his grave in St. Paul's, Covent Garden, hard by the narrow street where he had followed his humble profession, his 'William' had painted the Ulysses!

The painter afterwards composed an inscription for his father's monument:

IN THE VAULT
BENEATH AND NEAR THIS PLACE
ARE DEPOSITED THE REMAINS OF
WILLIAM TURNER,
MANY YEARS AN INHABITANT OF THIS PARISH,
WHO DIED
SEPTEMBER 21ST, 1830.
TO HIS MEMORY AND OF HIS WIFE,
MARY ANN,
THEIR SON, J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.,
HAS PLACED THIS TABLET.
AUGUST, 1832.

Internal evidence, if all other were wanting, would prove this to be a Turnerian composition. The pleonasm in the second line, and the omission in the eighth, could have occurred to nobody but the author of the 'Fallacies of Hope,' in the arrangement of carefully-chosen words to be chiselled on enduring marble. It may, however, be suggested in Turner's defence, that it is possible to be beneath us without being near to us. New Zealand is beneath us, but not near; and what of the southern constellations?

It was in the year 1830 that Rogers' 'Italy' first appeared with Turner's illustrations, and his 'Poems' were

published four years later, illustrated in the same manner. These editions were splendid examples of the degree of perfection then attained by Englishmen in the various arts which combine to produce the *livre de luxe*. They could not have been produced at the beginning of the century, and fine copies of them will ever remain a monument of English genius and taste in combination with various kinds of artistic and mechanical skill. Very ill-natured things have been said about Rogers for wishing to get down to posterity by Turner's assistance, and there are some clever epigrams on the subject; but it may be observed that in this instance there were two persons in one—a singularly intelligent lover of art and a maker of elegant verses, the lover of art being quite as much interested in the matter as the poet, or versifier, whichever we may decide to call him. It may be argued, further, that there is really more modesty than pride in permitting one's verses to become mere letterpress to accompany such an overwhelming artist as Turner. The result has certainly been to keep Mr. Roger's poetry in existence, and to give it a sort of immortality; but it is an immortality which few would envy. The pride of a real poet is to think that his verses will endure by their own vitality, and we learn without surprise that Lamartine was vexed when his exquisite poem 'Le Lac' was set to music, although the music was exquisite too, and that a famous English poet of the present day unwillingly submitted to illustration in the supposed interest of his publishers.

Turner has seldom been so perfectly the poet as in the illustrations to Rogers. The vignette form may have

aided him here, as it is more poetical in itself than the picture bounded by four hard straight lines with as many right angles at the corners, but the vignette cannot make a poet, though it may be convenient for one. It answers to some pretty lyrical form in literature, which charms us in the songs of a true singer, and leaves us perfectly indifferent in the attempts of the incapable. Of all artists who ever lived I think it is Turner who treated the vignette most exquisitely, and if it were necessary to find some particular reason for this, I should say that it may have been because there was nothing harsh or rigid in his genius, that forms and colours melted into each other tenderly in his dream-world, and that his sense of gradation was the most delicate ever possessed by man. If you examine a vignette by Turner round its edges, if you can call them edges, you will perceive how exquisitely the objects come out of nothingness into being, and how cautiously, as a general rule, he will avoid anything like too much materialism in his treatment of them until he gets well towards the centre. There is some inequality in the beauty of the vignettes, they are not all of them equally exquisite; but even the least poetical are still very far removed from the prose of art, whilst it is simply impossible to find in them any careless neglect of those subtle artifices of arrangement which Turner understood better than any other landscape painter. Comparisons in art are usually profitless, but they may be sometimes instructive when the works to be compared are of the same class. I will not compare Turner's art in the composition of the vignette with that of Stothard, because Stothard was not a landscape painter, and he had not naturally the faculty

which arranges things most happily in vignettes; it is enough to say that Stothard's contributions to the illustrated edition of Rogers, though often graceful and charming, look like patches on the page, and the patches are sometimes awkwardly shaped, whilst Turner's never seem to be shaped or put on the paper at all, but we feel as if a portion of the beautiful white surface had in some wonderful way begun to glow with the light of genius. We feel this quality in the Turnerian vignettes most strongly when we compare them with works of the same class, and nearly the same date, such as the vignettes to Burns by Mr. D. O. Hill, which were published in 1835. I am not so ungracious as to mention Mr. Hill only to sacrifice his reputation to the fame of a greater than he. His vignettes have often given me pleasure, for which I am not ungrateful. They are poetic in feeling, and he had many of the qualities of a landscape painter, such as a love of luxuriance in vegetation, a fine sense of distance, an enjoyment of light, and a proud affection for Scottish lowland scenery which made his heart sensitive to its rich beauty. His engravers were as skilful as those who worked from Turner, being in some cases the very same men; still the result is invariably heavier, and the talent of the one artist seems overburdened by mere matter, whereas the genius of the other uses material nature only for artistic and spiritual ends.

I have not space for any minute analysis of Turner's vignettes, but cannot leave them without saying a few words more. They may be divided into landscape subjects, marines, architecture, and supernatural inventions.

The vignette of Derwentwater is one of the best of the pure landscapes. The sky, with great pale clouds and the sun in his splendour lighting their edges, is one of the most perfect of all Turner's skies for its delicate truth of pale tones. The treatment of the landscape material is arbitrary, of course; the islands are arranged at the artist's pleasure, the forms of the hills are entirely altered, a dark mass being enormously exaggerated to show what Rogers called 'the tumbling tide of dread Lodore;' but the vignette is an exquisite idealisation of a lake. The bits of Alpine scenery in 'Jacqueline' and 'The Alps at Daybreak' are especially admirable for their expression of that shadowy vastness which so strongly impresses us in the loftiest ranges. I have heard artists affirm that even a large picture can give no idea of a lofty mountain, yet the vignette of the Garonnelle, with the Alps of Piedmont in the distance, gives me such an idea quite perfectly, and it is only three inches high. This is due, not to truth of portraiture, which Turner always neglected, but to his knowledge of mountain structure and effect. Any one who knows the Alps can see at once that these really *are* Alps, twelve thousand feet high at least, though a Cumberland hill seen near would have its sky line quite as high on the paper. One of the finest of the marine subjects is Columbus discovering land, and here again we have clear evidence that a great scale is not necessary to the production of a great effect. The line of sea horizon is only about an inch and a quarter long in the engraving, yet from the effect chosen in water and sky it conveys an awful idea of the vastness of the deep. The

figure in its simple grandeur, with the old ship for a pedestal, is one of Turner's rare successes in figure conception. There are two particularly successful instances of the treatment of architecture: one a building seen from outside, Greenwich Hospital; the other the interior of an imaginary Gothic chapel with banners and tombs. The Greenwich is another excellent instance of largeness expressed on a small scale. The vastness of the building is intentionally exaggerated, and it is made to look prodigious. Who would believe that the twin towers, with the domes, are only an inch high on the paper? Their real measurement is rather less, being nine-tenths of an inch exactly. Within that little space you have columns on columns, cornices, architraves, attics, dome, and lantern, all drawn with the most exquisite care, and there is a delicate play of light and shadow along the whole front of the building. A very grand bit of supernaturalism is that of the armed phantoms passing across the sky after sunset.

> 'Slowly along the evening sky they went,
> As on the edge of some vast battlement;
> Helmet and shield, and spear and gonfalon,
> Streaming a baleful light that was not of the sun!'

The verses are impressive, but the drawing is much more impressive than the verses. The last rays of the afterglow are in the sky; the ships are motionless on the dark ocean; on the high poop of one of them stands a little human figure, and before him passes the strange procession of giant shapes, half mingled with low vapour, through which a solitary star shines dimly. The superiority of the drawing to the verses is due, I believe,

to the greater resources of mystery which the painter had at his disposal. The sense of mystery *can* be conveyed in words, but not easily in a few lines.

In 1830 Turner exhibited nothing but *Pilate washing his hands before the multitude*, which was one of the painter's failures, as the reader may well imagine from the subject. It is in the national collection, and the canvas measures nearly four feet by three.

In the same year the painter revisited Scotland, being commissioned by Mr. Cadell, the publisher, to make twenty-four drawings in illustration of Scott's Poetical Works. Amongst these are two or three celebrated ones. The *Loch Corriskin, Skye*, is a scene of extraordinary desolation, which Turner felt profoundly, notwithstanding his love for the richer beauty of the south. He drew the precipices and the gloomy lake with great fidelity to the character of the place, which had deeply impressed him. Turner is reported to have said that he nearly lost his life at Loch Corriskin by slipping down a precipice, but saved himself by grasping two tufts of grass; a proof that Scott had used a poet's license in the well-known verses in 'The Lord of the Isles:'

> 'On high Benmore green mosses grow,
> And heath-bells bud in deep Glencroe;
> And copse on Cruchan-Ben;
> But here—above, around, below,
> On mountain or in glen,
> Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
> Nor ought of vegetative power,
> The weary eye may ken.'

The *Melrose* is a beautiful piece of lowland river scenery, the broad Tweed flowing through the plain, the

Eildon hills in the distance. The river is treated with excellent taste, the character of its shore line being at the same time graceful and very carefully studied; the hills are drawn with the greatest delicacy, and retain their true hill character, not being turned into mountains. This is the scene that Scott loved better than any other scene on earth; these are the hills and this the river which agitated him with profound emotion when he came back a shattered creature, insensible to the charms of every land but this, from that weary voyage to Italy.

The foreground in the *Melrose* is one of the most unfortunate in Turner's compositions. A cart and two horses are set just upon the lower boundary line of the drawing to tell against the space of shining river, and throw it well back, and keep it down in the plain; but the cart is much too conspicuous in itself, and too ugly, and it composes with nothing whatever. The little picnic party to the right is not so objectionable. It is highly probable that these figures of gentlemen taking their ease, with bottle, provision-basket, and newspaper, may have been suggested by the party from Abbotsford, for Lockhart tells us that during Turner's visit at the house, Sir Walter and his friends accompanied him on excursions in the neighbourhood, in quest of subjects for his pencil.

'On several such occasions,' said Lockhart, 'I was of the party, and one day deserves especially to be remembered. Sir Walter took Turner that morning, with his friend Skene and myself, to Smailholm Crags; and it was while lounging about them, while the painter

did his sketch, that he told Mr. Skene legends of the place.

'He then carried us to Dryburgh, but excused himself from attending Mr. Turner into the enclosure. Mr. Skene and I perceived that it would be better for us to leave him alone, and we both accompanied Turner.'

This desire on Scott's part for a moment of solitude at Dryburgh reminds us that in 1830 he was a saddened man; that she whom he called 'My Charlotte, my thirty years' companion,' was already lying in the family grave under the ruin; that for four years he had maintained a gigantic effort to pay his debts, and that little strength remained to support him under a mountain of afflictions. He could be submissively courageous even yet, but the end of his labour was at hand, and it is likely that whilst Turner was sketching Dryburgh the Last Minstrel was looking forward to his long rest in that place which so many of us have since visited for his sake.

Amongst other drawings made during this excursion was one of Abbotsford, and I well remember both the intensely romantic feelings which the engraving from it used to awaken in me long ago, and the extreme disappointment produced in me, as in many others, by the building itself—a disappointment partly due to the exaggerated descriptions of Sir Walter's home as a romance or poem in stone and mortar, but due also in great measure to Turner's exalting and ennobling imagination. In his drawing Scott's country-house became a fairy castle of vast size in a beautiful domain on the side of a noble stream; in reality Abbotsford is only a fantastic residence, imposing neither by its size

nor by its architecture, whilst the Tweed near the house would be but a very ordinary stream if it had not been consecrated for us by the affection of an immortal genius.

Besides the twenty-four drawings to illustrate Scott's poems, Turner undertook, for the same Edinburgh publisher (Mr. Cadell), a series of illustrations of his prose works. The main distinction between the two undertakings is that the poems kept the artist entirely to local subjects in the northern parts of our own island, from Staffa and Loch Corriskin for 'The Lord of the Isles,' to the Junction of the Greta and Tees in illustration of 'Rokeby;' whereas, on the other hand, the range of the prose works was much wider, and here Turner could have recourse to his own accumulations of British and Continental studies, and even materials supplied by others. A good many of his French studies came in conveniently, and after making four illustrations of Jerusalem for Finden's Bible, it was not difficult to make a fifth for a new purpose. There were forty illustrations to the prose works, in all, and of these twenty-three are foreign, and only fourteen Scottish.*

* There has been some confusion of dates about Turner's visits to Scotland. A lady in Jersey, whose name is not given, said in a letter, dated Sept. 23, 1831, 'Mr. Turner is returned from Scotland, where the weather has been very boisterous, and his health not improved by the excursion.' Probably, in consequence of this letter, Mr. Thornbury says, 'In the autumn of 1831 Turner was employed by Mr. Cadell to make a collection of twenty-four sketches for a new edition of Scott's poems, the publisher to retain the drawings.' On the other hand, Lockhart fixes Turner's visits to the scenes of Scott's poetry, in company with Scott himself, as having occurred in 1830, which is evidently the correct date, as Sir Walter quitted Scotland for Italy in the autumn of 1831, and had been unwell from the beginning of the year. It is possible, but I have at present no evidence on the point beyond the anonymous Jersey lady, and her evidence comes to us at second-hand through Mr. Thornbury, that Turner may have visited Scotland again in 1831.

CHAPTER XII.

The 'Rivers of France.'—Turner's architecture.—Inaccuracy of other artists.—The rivers of France—colour.—The rivers of France—Turnerian charm.

THE famous work, the 'Rivers of France,' which in its latest edition was called *Liber Fluviorum* by Mr. Bohn, the publisher, was at first issued in three successive years under the title 'Turner's Annual Tour.' It was published 'for the proprietor' by Moon, Boys, and Graves, but before the work was completed the title of the firm had changed to Hodgson, Boys, and Graves. The title-page of each year's issue was adorned with a vignette, and the three vignettes are amongst the most beautiful which Turner ever produced. The drawings engraved in the body of the work are all oblong, and the engravings generally measure five inches and a half by rather less than four inches. The proportion may be noticed for its avoidance of the long panoramic form, which is very tempting for its convenience in the representation of river scenery in lowland countries. How far this choice of shape may have been Turner's decision, or that of his publishers, who would naturally like a shape going conviently into a book, I am unable to inform the reader, but the matter is of more importance

than at first sight may appear. The nearer a shape approaches to the square form, the more a landscape-painter is tempted to exaggerate the height of things to fill up his composition and get things in, on each side; the more, on the contrary, the shape of the drawing is extended in horizontal length, the less this temptation will be felt.

It is said that Turner was associated for three successive seasons with Mr. Leitch Ritchie, who wrote the letterpress which now accompanies the illustrations to the 'Rivers of France,' but that their tastes were very dissimilar in everything except art, so that they travelled very little together. All that Mr. Ritchie had to say about Turner's ways of work was, that he noticed his wonderful exaggerations; for example that he would elevate the stunted cone of a village church into a tall steeple when it suited his purpose. If Mr. Ritchie had known Turner's habits as we know them, this would not have excited his surprise. He used to banter Turner about it afterwards in London, but without offending him, for the landscape-painter had his retort about literary license. Mr. Ritchie had attempted to identify Gilles de Retz with Blue Beard, by insisting that his beard was so intensely black as to have a shade of blue. 'This,' said Mr. Ritchie, 'tickled the great painter hugely, and his only reply to my bantering was, his little sharp eyes glistening the while, "Blue Beard! Blue Beard! Black Beard!"' This is all we learn from Turner's travelling companion about his ways of work on the French rivers, and it is not much.

The reader may remember Lord Byron's letter in

answer to Mr. Bowles about artificial things in poetry, in which he so stoutly maintained that artificial things have a poetry of their own. Thomas Campbell had written a vivid account of his emotions on witnessing the launch of a ship of the line. Bowles asserted that Campbell's ship derived all its poetry, not from art, but from nature, and was dependent for it upon the waves and winds. To this Byron vigorously replied, that the ship of the line conferred its own poetry on the waters and heightened theirs; after which, extending the argument from ships to other artificial things, he went on to speak of buildings on land as increasing the poetry of the land.

'Am I to be told,' he asked, 'that the nature of Attica would be *more* poetical without the art of the Acropolis? of the temple of Theseus? and of the still all Greek and glorious monuments of her exquisitely artificial genius? Ask the traveller what strikes him as most poetical—the Parthenon, or the rock on which it stands? the columns of Cape Colonna, or the Cape itself? the rocks at the foot of it, or the recollection that Falconer's *ship* was bulged upon them? There are a thousand rocks and capes far more picturesque than those of the Acropolis and Cape Sunium in themselves; what are they to a thousand scenes in the wilder parts of Greece, of Asia Minor, Switzerland, or even of Cintra in Portugal, or to many scenes of Italy, and the Sierras of Spain? But it is the "*art*," the columns, the temples, the wrecked vessel, which give them their antique and their modern poetry, and not the spots themselves. Without them the *spots* of earth would be unnoticed and unknown.'

I am not aware that Turner ever expressed opinions

such as these in *words*, but there are a thousand evidences in his numerous drawings that he agreed heartily with Byron in looking for the poetry of his subjects much more to man and man's works than to nature. Few landscape-painters have drawn so many buildings, and few painters of water have been so much disposed to crowd it with ships and boats. I will not go so far as to say that pure nature had no interest for him, but I think there is abundant evidence that it was unsatisfying to his mind. It would be easy to give rather a long list of compositions by Turner, in which there is no landscape whatever, but there is scarcely a single drawing or picture by him which does not contain either a boat, or a building, or a figure. One of the first things that strikes us on looking through the 'Rivers of France,' is how much less Turner seems to have cared for the rivers themselves than for the human works which are connected with them. The following analysis may throw some light upon his taste.

There are sixty plates in all, without counting the vignettes, and amongst these sixty plates I find fifteen with castles or châteaux in them, fifteen with cathedrals or important churches, twenty-two with at least one bridge, and of these there are six with two bridges. There are, also, half-a-dozen subjects of seaports with shipping and boats in abundance. You may even find that number of compositions without either water or landscape, the river being out of sight and the land all covered with buildings. The Boulevard des Italiens, for example, is given as an illustration of the Seine, which is like giving Regent Street as an illustration of

the Thames. At Orleans the place near the cathedral is preferred to the Loire, and in several other towns the artist willingly leaves the river for the streets. In the whole of the sixty plates there is not one without a building of some kind, and there is not a foreground without figures, nor a reach of water without boats. Men and their works are indeed so constantly predominant in these designs, that, to find the refreshment of pure nature, we must quit the encumbered earth and take refuge in the clouds of heaven.

Now, the theory of Byron and the practice of Turner assert a truth, which is that man's work may be poetical, but they assert it too strongly in assigning to natural beauty an entirely inferior position. There is such a thing as the real landscape instinct, which is quite closely connected with poetic emotion, and there is a rich abundance of beauty in pure nature for its satisfaction. It is this instinct which is not satisfied with Turner's selection of subjects on the French rivers, for they do not always flow through towns, under bridges, by castles and cathedrals. They pass through leagues and leagues of the sweetest rural scenery, where he who is indifferent to landscape beauty will find nothing whatever to interest him, but where the true lover of nature will be quietly gratified by a constant succession of beautifully grouped trees, or varied forms of shore, changing from the mountains of the Upper Loire to the *coteaux* of the vine-lands and the flat Dutch-looking distances of the plains. After floating for hours through these great spaces of rural France, when you are beginning to weary a little of river, and trees, and sky, you catch sight of some town in the distance with its old church, or, in rare

A. Brunet-Debaines sc

cases, its cathedral, and then a fresh reach of the river discloses a bridge of many arches and a jumble of roofs and chimneys half hidden by the trees of the public walk. It is *then* that you feel the value of the town as an ornament to the river, and when you have been all day alone with nature you are not sorry to communicate again with humanity, to see the groups of people about the wharf and boats, and gratify your love of architecture or your feeling for the picturesque by a hunt after the remains of the middle ages. Such are the pleasant experiences of artists who love the water; they see nature, and they see cities also, but they see them in due proportion. Now it seems on looking through these sixty plates from Turner as if, instead of leading us from town to town along the broad, beautiful water-way of the river, he had got into a diligence in one town and out of it at the next, like a traveller 'doing' the principal localities. Daubigny, who had not Turner's magnificence of conception, loved nature with a more intimate affection, and passed days and nights on the Seine in a combination of hut and boat, rudely enough contrived, yet a treasure for a student of river scenery. He was not a great genius like Turner, but he really loved the river, and in return for this simple devotion he was rewarded by an insight into its own natural beauty, which was wanting in the illustrious Englishman.*

* The following quotation from Mr. J. L. Molloy's 'Autumn Holiday on French Rivers' gives an excellent idea of what I mean. It is rather long, but so good and true, and so strikingly *àpropos* of our present subject, that the reader will thank me for not abridging it:—

'Then, far ahead, in a haze of sunset, rose up the indistinct outline of Blois.

'It was at such times we realised how grand was the Loire—the river of

What Turner cared for was the picturesque aspect of a French town taken as a whole, with its bridge, and towers, and multitudinous roofs. I cannot think that he took any very deep and serious interest in architecture for itself, though he liked it as an element of the picturesque. The front of Rouen Cathedral is very magnificent and impressive, and it is the most favourable example of architecture in the volume; but in other subjects, such as the castle of Amboise, the inaccuracies are of a kind which convinces me that the artist was thinking only of his poetical effect, and did not really care about architectural construction. As nothing is more unprofitable than generalities in criticism, we will direct our

ancient cities. Beautiful as the Seine was—in many respects far more so than the Loire—it fell far short of the latter in expanse. Here was something of the breadth and distance of the sea. I feel the difficulty, the impossibility even, of describing the effect it produced on us.

'*To come out of the solitariness of the river, let the boat drift with the tide, and turn round to watch the gradual unfolding of these cities, was in its way akin to the feeling of hearing for the first time one of the great symphonies of Beethoven.* And there is nothing fanciful in this comparison; it is the simple expression of the thought which occurred at the time. Many will understand how things, apparently opposite, and without any material connection, will, under certain influences, recall and suggest one another. Weber, from only seeing the tables, chairs, and benches of a *café*, piled up to the ceiling, composed one of his grandest triumphal marches. On days when the rain fell thick and heavy he wrote his most joyous music, on sunny days the saddest.

'I remember one of us saying that evening, as we looked at Blois, that it was like a peal of old bells, when they clang all together.

'Most of our readers will probably have seen all these towns and many parts of the Loire. But it will have been by diligence or rail, shooting suddenly from a tunnel into the heart of the city, and with passing glimpses of the river: for no steamers can ascend above Tours—and Gien, Orléans, Beaugency, Blois, and Amboise, are accessible by land only (except in small boats). *In no way but the way we travelled is it possible to see what these places really are, and how they are inseparable from the rivers.*'

attention more especially to Amboise. In the first of the two subjects, the two big round towers, for which the place is celebrated, are greatly exaggerated as to height, which deprives them of much of their massive character. It is plainly impossible to drive a carriage up the inside of Turner's towers, but it can be done in one of the real ones. In the reality, there is an old palace apparently built on the top of a very strong feudal castle.* Turner has been faithful to the idea just so far as this, but all his architectural details are wrong, even big details—wrong every one of them; and this inaccuracy is still more evident in the illustration called the *Château of Amboise*, where the architecture is conspicuous, and required care. What surprises me, even yet, after long familiarity with Turner's ways of work, is his disdain, not of the ugly truths which artists often avoid, but of the beautiful truths which the artistic temperament usually delights in. The real Château of Ambrose is not only different from Turner's, but certainly more beautiful than his, and far more picturesque.

The reader may remember that in my criticism of Turner's Kilchurn Castle† I pointed out his omission of important architectural features, such as the corbelled turrets at the corners. In the Château of Amboise it is not so much omission that one has to complain of, as wilful or involuntary misrepresentation. I can give a parallel instance from literature. M. Louis Énault says that the English inscribe in letters of gold on the front of their museums, 'A thing of art is an endless joy.' Of course

* It is really built upon a rock, encased in walls with towers.

† See page 68.

we recognise what he means; he means the immortal verse of Keats, which was inscribed at one end of the Art Treasures' Exhibition at Manchester; and the Frenchman's line contains a sort of muddled reminiscence of everything in the original, but on the whole the English reader may still prefer, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' Well, Turner's drawing of Amboise produces exactly that effect upon me. It may be an improvement, but I cannot help preferring the real thing.

I will mention two instances more. In the view of the Pont Neuf, at Paris, the tower of St. Jacques de la Boucherie is brought in at the left by a permissible violation of strict topography which would have kept it out of the drawing. As the artist had gone somewhat out of his way to adorn his subject with the tower, it is natural to expect that he would look at it, yet his drawing gives evidence of the most perfect indifference to its architecture. It is rather a large object in the drawing, it is a very important object, it is quite near enough for its general character to be seen plainly and its details mysteriously, yet neither character nor detail is given, and a grossly commonplace piece of nineteenth century Gothic is substituted for one of the most perfectly beautiful, one of the most exquisitely elegant masterpieces of the middle ages. Not much is seen of the towers of Notre Dame, but the little we do see abounds in architectural errors. A draughtsman so careless about noble architecture was not likely to pay more attention to that of streets and houses, and, provided that he got an effect of quantity and mystery, he attempted little more. Still, it is difficult to avoid a feeling of surprise at Turner's

indifference to blocks of building which have an especial picturesque interest. Trees grow now on the point of the island between the two halves of the bridge, and hide the houses at the Place Dauphine from the point of view in Turner's sketch ; but when he drew it, either there were no trees at all, or else he removed them on purpose. In either case one is surprised at his neglect of the houses, because, as every Parisian artist knows, they are quite remarkably picturesque, with their cumbrous roofs overburdened with dormer windows and chimneys. Of course the houses *were* there in Turner's time, and long before, according to the poet:

> 'Ces deux maisons, Ventre Sainct Gris !
> Je les cognois, dict Henry Quatre,
> Icelles sont du vieulx Paris !'

Another of the Parisian subjects affords a good opportunity for testing the draughtsmanship of the artist, because the materials in it are familiar. In the *Hôtel de Ville* and the *Pont d'Arcole* we have three well-known buildings—1. Part of the old Hôtel de Ville—2. The Church of St. Gervais—3. The Pump in the river. The absence of refinement, of truth, and of precision, in Turner's representation of these buildings is decisive, and settles the question. If the reader will compare Turner's *Hôtel de Ville* with a photograph of the real one, he will see that the landscape-painter's interpretation entirely loses the elegance of the original. The Pump was a very picturespue object (a tower between two wings, the whole erected on a great intricate wooden scaffolding, through which the water flowed), and it was etched by Méryon with great delicacy and truth. If the reader has

an opportunity for comparing the etching with the engraving after Turner he will see the difference. I should not find fault with minor inaccuracies if truth of character were preserved; but it is not preserved in these instances. The elegance of the tower of St. Jacques and the Hôtel de Ville is as much sacrificed as their details. The real Pump was picturesque, with a certain purity and stateliness which Méryon gave; Turner made it picturesque in quite another way, and a much coarser and ruder way.

By the common consent of humanity a fault is half excused, and more than half excused, when it is known to be general. If all Cretans were liars, a Cretan of ordinary virtue would have been a liar like the rest of his countrymen; and for a Cretan to tell the truth he would have needed, not ordinary commonplace virtue, but that exceptional virtue of the saint or hero which we admire when we meet with it, but expect from no ordinary mortal. To be quite fair towards Turner we ought to take into account the general state of the art he practised. Of the accomplished artists of his time Turner was, I quite believe, the most inaccurate, and the most ready to shut his eyes to truths which did not interest him; but if you examine the work of his contemporaries with any strictness, you will find the same indifference, in minor degrees, without the compensation of that exquisite charm which has made Turner's work immortal. If the reader should happen to have the opportunity of comparing an engraving from Stanfield's Verrex in the Val d'Aosta with Harding's drawing of the same place (both exactly from the same point of

view), he will see to what extent those artists considered themselves at liberty to treat buildings as they pleased, for one, or both, must be wrong in every detail.* Turner's carelessness of architectural truth goes farther, no doubt, but it is the same thing in principle. It has been said that picturesque drawing and architectural drawing are so distinct that the one disqualifies for the other, and when inaccuracy has become a habit it cannot be cured at a moment's notice, merely because the artist happens to be drawing some very beautiful object, like the tower of St. Jacques de la Boucherie. But the true philosophy of the subject goes deeper than this practical side of the question. It has been stated by Joubert, in one of his profound sentences:—'The poet's subject,' he says (and a painter like Turner is just as much a poet as any maker of verses), 'should present to his genius a region of fantasy which he can expand or contract at pleasure. *Places that are too real*, and persons that are too historical, imprison his mind and confine his movements.' Such an object as the tower of St. Jacques, or a wing of the Hôtel de Ville, is too real to be dealt with by so poetic an artist as Turner, because he must either think of *its own* beauty too much, or else represent it unsatisfactorily. I do not think that a faithful representation of the tower of St. Jacques would have spoiled that particular drawing, but I am quite convinced that the objective spirit

* A very able artist, who has drawn architecture in Italy, France, and elsewhere, for half a century, wrote to me as follows about the drawing of Venetian architecture by Turner, Stanfield, and Prout: 'However charming and talented their works may be in a picturesque sense, they are all, and without one exception that I can now call to mind, clumsily, heavily, and incorrectly drawn so far as architectural form and beauty are concerned. Architects, I believe, are unanimously of this opinion.

which would have enabled Turner to draw architecture faithfully, would have destroyed in him that imaginative spirit which produced the Turnerian world of dreams. It is true that Méryon was a poet in his way also, and that he saw very clearly, and was on the whole a fairly faithful draughtsman, but the cases are quite different. Méryon's gift was a sensibility to emotion in the presence of certain buildings, and a power to communicate that emotion by a very clear representation of them, in which his own passion betrayed itself more by subtle modulations of line, and by a certain morbid intensity of perception, than by any very manifest unfaithfulness; Turner's poetry was not in clearness at all, but in confusion and mystery, and the *object* at all times had less hold upon his memory and imagination than the effect.

To understand the impossibility of an accurate Turner, the reader has only to realise to himself what accuracy really is. It involves the complete suppression of feeling and imagination in the artist, and no imaginative artist will do anything so suicidal as to suppress his own imagination. Again, to require of Turner that he should be accurate in his representations of architecture, would be to require of him the subordination of his own art to another art, the effacement of himself in the presence of any builder who happened to have erected a church steeple. The slightest reflection will convince us that a genius like Turner's is far too strongly personal for such humility as this. Again, we are much too apt to associate memory and imagination together in our minds, as if one never weakened the other. We forget Pope's doctrine, which is the true one:

'Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.'

The imagination substitutes fresh images for those which a good memory, without imagination, would retain.

Since the whole influence of common custom amongst artists, and of Turner's own imagination, made him a glaringly inaccurate architectural draughtsman, it may be asked why he drew really existing architecture at all. Why did he not confine himself simply to pure inventions like the architecture in his Carthages, which never existed in any country under the sun, and which no builder will ever be extravagant enough, or so misguided, as to erect in stone and mortar? The answer is of a double character. In the first place, Turner felt a certain emotion in the presence of architecture which operated upon his mind, and tempted him to make drawings in which the buildings which he admired occupied a very important place. Besides this, Turner was a keen man of business, and he knew that the sale of a set of engravings was much safer when they bore the names of places that tourists had seen, or might possibly hope to see; places not avowedly in dreamland, but actually mentioned in the map. As for his inaccuracies, they might puzzle a solitary traveller now and then, but people are usually so wonderfully unobservant that they cannot detect them. Before the invention of photography, the most absurdly inaccurate engravings and lithographs of public buildings were bought in thousands, and carried away contentedly by travellers, who were satisfied so long as a tower did not look like a dome, nor an obelisk like a factory chimney.

It would be of little use to enter into an elaborate dissertation on the colouring of the drawings for the 'Rivers of France,' but I may make a few brief observations, founded upon a close acquaintance with the country itself.

Every land has certain special characteristics in its colouring, and we may judge, to a great extent, of an artist's affectionate intimacy with his subject by the fidelity with which he recalls these special characteristics. Now I do not recognise this kind of fidelity in Turner's colouring of French scenery. It seems to me that he coloured according to his own general conceptions of what would be harmonious, with little or no reference to the natural quality and effects of French landscape. The drawings are brilliant, and often crude in their brilliance; they are never simply natural. Here, again, as in the matter of architectural form, the intensely strong personality of the artist subordinated truth to imagination, and led him to substitute what he imagined for what he saw. The drawings were seldom, it is believed, coloured in the presence of nature; Turner's more usual custom having been to sketch from nature in pencil and dash the colour on his sketch afterwards; but however this may have been, we know the result, which is rather the play of a man of genius with his materials than the sober endeavour to render the real aspects of the country. If the reader will imagine Turner as a supremely clever executant in water-colour, who played with his orange and purple, his red and green, his washes of cool grey to refresh the eye, and his touches of burning scarlet to excite it, just as a musical composer will

combine the effects of the various instruments in an orchestra, he will, I sincerely believe, not be very far from a just appreciation of his work. I will go even a little farther and venture upon the assertion that it is only the minor colourists who are quiet-minded enough, or humble enough, for fidelity. All the splendid colourists, the men who dazzle and astonish and win great reputations for their colour-power, are utterly audacious in their manner of dealing with the truth of nature. They go beyond it to play their own mighty music. We all know the Rubens colour, with its regular set scale of tints, so admirably and truly analysed by Fromentin. Turner was more various, but not less personal, and if I were asked whether his colour reminded me of France, I should answer, No, not of France, but of Turner. And if the inquirer pushed his examination so far as to ask whether the Turnerian colour seemed to me a compensation for the colouring of nature, I should answer that the two appeal to different sentiments, that Turner's work is a display, an exhibition of power and dexterity, calling for admiration, whereas the comparatively humble artists who touch our hearts by reminding us of the scenes and effects we thoroughly and intimately know, make little display, and are seldom extolled for genius, but find their way to our affection. The reader will please remember that I am speaking here of colour, and, for the moment, of colour only. Well, in two words, the drawings for the 'Rivers of France' seem to me astonishing curiosities.* No one

* In the chapter on Turner's studies I went into the subject of his colouring, and explained how he coloured with a view to obtain certain chromatic results rather than truth to nature. It is, unfortunately, not

but their author could have done them, but they are simply the play of a consummate artist with the materials in his colour-box. This free way of playing with chromatic elements is the true sign of a great colour-faculty, and the only way to produce splendid results, but though originally suggested by nature, it leaves nature out in the cold.

After having denied the truth of Turner's architecture, and the truth of his colour also, I may be suspected of saying favourable things merely by way of compensation, and to reconcile myself in some measure with English public opinion, which left him to sell his drawings for a few pounds each and now purchases them at the rate of twenty guineas the square inch. Be this as it may, the truth must be told on both sides. After all the deductions of criticism the charm of the work remains. It is with these drawings as with the romances of Sir Walter Scott: a time comes in the life of every intelligent reader when he perceives that Scott was not and could not be, really true to the times he represented, except when they approached very near his own; but a student of literature would be much to be pitied who was unable to enjoy 'Ivanhoe' after this discovery. So when we have found out the excessive freedom which Turner allowed himself; when we have discovered that he is not to be trusted for the representation of any

possible to maintain any argument about colour by giving examples, because if reproductions were given an opponent could answer (probably with truth) that the reproductions were not like the originals. If the reader could be with me with the originals before us I would soon show him what I mean. Turner as a colourist was splendid and powerful, but utterly unfaithful.

object, however important—that his chiaroscuro, though effective, is arbitrary, and his colour, though brilliant, is false; when we have quite satisfied ourselves, in a word, that he is a poet, and not an architectural draughtsman, or an imitator of nature, is that a reason why we should not enjoy the poems? There is a wide difference, I grant, between the pleasure of real belief and the pleasure of confessed imagination: the first belongs to imaginative ignorance, and is only possible for the uncritical; the second belongs to a state of knowledge, and is only possible for those in whom the acquisition of knowledge has not deadened the imaginative faculties. Show the 'Rivers of France' to a boy who has the natural faculties which perceive beauty, but who is still innocent of criticism, he will believe the drawings to be true, and think as he dreams over them that a day may come when he will visit these enchanting scenes. Show them to a real critic, and he will not accept for fact a single statement made by the draughtsman from beginning to end, but he will say, 'The poetic power is here,' and then he will yield to its influence, and dream also in his own way—not, like the boy, in simple faith, but in the pleasant make-belief faith which is all that the poet asks of us.

'Who believes me shall behold
* * * * *
Only believe me. Ye believe?
Appears
Verona . . . . . '

The worst passages in Turner, as in Milton and Wordsworth, are the matter-of-fact passages, where the poetic faculty has not acted with sufficient energy to fuse

the material. In landscape-painting, this danger is greatest in proximity to the foreground, and in the 'Rivers of France' the foregrounds are often prosaic and unpleasant when the material is of an inconvenient kind, such as angular steps, logs of wood, and pieces of barren shore which had to be covered with figures to hide their want of interest. The distances are always poetical, full of exquisite invention of distant detail, and of minute beauties in which the spectator is constantly making fresh discoveries. The town subjects, in which there is little or no distance, are the least satisfactory. The *St. Julian's, Tours*, in which all the material is matter-of-fact—a church quite near, a diligence with horses and people—is a subject unsuited to Turner's genius, painfully exhibiting his deficiencies as a draughtsman; the distant view of Rouen, with its vastness of extent and mystery of distance, full of minute indications, all of which set the imagination to work immediately, is, on the contrary, precisely one of those subjects in which he has had no rival. Some of the finest things in the volume are amongst the simplest; the *Clairmont*, for example, with its château perched on a rocky height with a fine hollow of wooded land behind it. All is simple in this composition; the land is in large masses, the boats are few, and there is a single star in the calm evening sky. In every instance where a long sweep of river has been attempted the result is a striking success, that being one of the characteristics of French scenery by which Turner was most powerfully impressed. His drawing of the forms of land, coteaux and plains, is always beautiful, though the height of the coteaux is generally ex-

aggerated, and nothing can surpass the exquisite sense of mystery with which Turner finds the outline of a remote rise of land and loses it again. His use of cloud, of smoke or steam from chimneys or boats, is admirable, both near and in the distance, and he avails himself of it in the most cunning manner to lighten masses which might otherwise appear heavy or monotonous. Sky and water, under very varied effects, are never less than exquisite. The system of light-and-shade, as usual with Turner, is delicate and subtle, but arbitrary. He will observe most minute distinctions of tone and rely far more upon them than on vulgar oppositions of black and white; but at the same time he will not be bound by scientific truth. Shadows are cast just where he wants them, whether there is any luminary to cast the shadows or not, and when the luminary is there it generally throws the shadow in quite impossible positions.

Turner understood some aspects of French scenery with peculiar sympathy and felicity, but there is much in French landscape character which lies outside of Turner's range, and has been discovered gradually by the affectionate explorations of the native painters. The chief distinctions between his work and theirs may be expressed as follows. He was interested chiefly in towns and in landscape distances; they avoid the towns (with a few exceptions) and attach themselves to rustic subjects, the main interest of which lies either in the foreground or in the middle distance. They have also a certain simplicity and earnestness of sentiment which were generally wanting in Turner, who loved elaboration, quantity, and brilliance. Turner's view of France

is the view rather of a traveller than a resident. The view taken by the French landscape-painters themselves has, in almost all cases, been curiously (if I may use the word in this uncommon application) *residential.* One of the best of them, who lives within a morning's drive of one of the finest parts of the Loire, never paints the Loire and its magnificent distances at all, but confines himself to the little rustic bits within a mile of his own house, which is in a retired part of the country, buried in dense woods. This is what I call the residential spirit in an artist. It acts, to the letter, on Longfellow's advice:

> 'That is best which lieth nearest:
> Shape from that thy work of art.'

CHAPTER XIII.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.—Turner's technical carelessness.—The Golden Bough.—The Venice pictures. An American criticism.—French enthusiasm.—Illustrations to Milton.—Mercury and Argus.—The Phryne.—Turner and Mr. Bohn.—Switzerland and Italy.—The Agrippina.—Illustrations to 'The Epicurean.'

IT is not necessary to mention every one of Turner's pictures in the course of this biography, which, if that were done, would be likely to become a catalogue. I may also be pardoned for not saying much about pictures which leave me simply indifferent, such as the *Caligula's Palace and Bridge*, which, in spite of its fine trees and bright effect of sunshine behind architecture, is too obviously artificial, too devoid of any true inspiration, for much æsthetic satisfaction or enjoyment. This picture was exhibited in 1831, and it belongs to the somewhat undecided time in which the artist's genius had not yet delivered itself from what may be called the piled-up sublimities. In 1832 the painter exhibited a much more memorable work, entitled *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Italy)*. The conception of this picture was very broadly comprehensive. Turner set himself the difficult, yet not impossible, task of representing, in a single important work, a *résumé* of what was most char-

acteristic of Italian scenery. Such a scheme, notwithstanding its difficulties, was far better adapted to the imaginative intellect of the artist than the representation of particular localities. It gave his inspiration free play, entirely emancipated him from even the slight restraint of his own kind of topography, and left him face to face with a problem which he was more competent to deal with than any other artist. The allusion to 'Childe Harold' refers particularly to the twenty-sixth stanza of the fourth canto, which was quoted in the Academy catalogue:

> 'And now, fair Italy!
> Thou art the garden of the world, the home
> Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
> Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
> Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
> More rich than other clime's fertility;
> Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
> With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.'

Turner's conception of this typical Italy included a mountainous distance, the distances in Italy being very generally mountainous; an interesting middle distance, with hill and wood and water, plenty of buildings, partly ruinous, in memory of the past; and a foreground, with a stone-pine which struck the artist as the most characteristic Italian tree, and figures enjoying the sweet warm southern evening, in the southern manner, with dancing and festivity in the open air. This picture belongs to a category of works which it is perfect folly to criticise; for the critical spirit, however useful and even necessary may be the services which it renders, is always a spirit of reserve, of caution, of investigation, whilst to enjoy great

poems we need simply to tune our feelings into unison with those of the poet himself, and let them vibrate sympathetically as the strings of a piano vibrate in answer to the notes of a violinist. The motive of the picture was not to astonish by grandeur, but to charm by what is loveliest in landscape; and so there is in it little or nothing of sublimity except the moderate sublimity of the hill to the left, whose summit is crowned with buildings, and the quiet kind of sublimity which belongs to ruin always. Soft outlines melting in the distant atmosphere; gentle curves of earth everywhere; rich masses of remoter foliage, and luxuriant vegetation in the foreground; these of themselves would suggest ideas of beauty, but they are sustained and accompanied by the tenderest, most delicate execution, and by a fortunate sureness of taste in the treatment of every detail. Unhappily, the picture is far from being in a satisfactory material condition.

Turner's disregard for the permanence of his work was simply absolute; he seems to have been indifferent to that most valuable of all sciences for a painter, the knowledge of pigments in their material effects upon each other. His work gained greatly in refinement as he advanced in art, but it lost in material substance, so that the heavy early pictures, the brown and grey works executed when the painter was as yet only feeling his way timidly to colour, are often the best preserved. In later life he got into a fatal way of treating oil as if it had been water-colour, with a recklessness of everything but the immediate effect, which it would be difficult to parallel in the history of the great old masters, though

several moderns have been equally reckless, if reckless in other ways. Turner's technical sins may be classed in two categories: he did not care what colours he used, and he did not care about the material consequences of his manner of using them. He would employ pigments which are known to be unsafe, and he would lay his tints on the canvas without taking into consideration results which may be predicted with all the certainty of science. The art of painting a picture which shall last five hundred years is by this time clearly understood; the permanent pigments are known, and so are the fugitive and mutually destructive pigments; we are able, also, to calculate with certainty on many effects of method in painting—we know that a thin coat of paint which perfectly conceals what is beneath it when it is first laid on will in course of time no longer do so with the same completeness; and although we may not be able to determine beforehand all the innumerable and highly complex effects of technical imprudences, we can at least avoid them.

Most unfortunately for Turner, and for all who value his art, he could not endure the slight restraints which technical wisdom imposes upon a painter. He gave his genius *libre carrière*, as if pigments had required no more care in their management than washes of Indian ink; and by one of the strangest contradictions ever exhibited by inconsistent human nature, at the very time when he was beginning to form great projects for the establishment of his posthumous fame, he refused to take the simple, easy, and well-known precautions which would have secured the permanence of those very works

on which his fame depended. The *Childe Harold* picture has gone to pieces. The changes in certain portions of the work are painfully evident, and although it may still be enjoyed, it is only with that melancholy pleasure that we take in spoiled and ruined things which have once been ineffably exquisite.

A picture of less importance, but not entirely dissimilar in character, *Lake Avernus, the Fates and the Golden Bough*, was exhibited in 1834, and afterwards purchased by Mr. Vernon, who bequeathed it to the nation along with the other pictures in his gallery. Here, too, we have an Italian scene, with a stone-pine in the foreground, water and richly-wooded land in the middle distance, and pale hills or mountains far away. The subject is from the sixth book of the Æneid in the page following the universally known bit:

> 'Facilis descensus Averno;
> Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:
> Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
> Hoc opus, hic labor est.'

The golden bough was a branch which, when plucked, enabled the bearer to visit the infernal regions safely and come back to the light of the day.

> 'Latet arbore opaca
> Aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus,
> Junoni infernæ dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis
> Lucus et obscuris claudunt convallibus umbræ.
> Sed non ante datur telluris operta subire,
> Auricomos quamquis decerpserit arbore fetus.'

Turner liked to give a poetical association to his pictures, and in this instance he was more than usually

happy, for *The Golden Bough* is as pretty a title as a landscape-painter could find, whilst *Avernus* is, at the same time, interesting for its natural beauty and curiosity; and just a little awful for its mythological attributes, even yet not wholly incredible by the cultivated imagination. The painter, however, so treated his subject that the pale blue waters of Avernus, sleeping so calmly in their deep basin, scarcely recall to us, as we see them in the picture, that dark river Acheron, from which they were believed to rise. The only motive of the painter appears to have been beauty; the beauty of a fair Italian landscape, idealised to the utmost by the power of his own genius. The pictures of this class are, I believe, the most perfect and complete expression ever given by Turner to his sense of charm and loveliness in landscape, as distinguished from his sterner delight in the sublime. No one who has not tried to paint, and tried seriously and long, can estimate justly the delicacy of tone and colour in these pictures, the exquisiteness of the transitions in the lightest passages, and the sustained refinement which could carry the artist safely over twenty or thirty square feet of canvas, when the slightest failure would have shown as an intolerable blot upon his work. If at this time of his life, when he had formed his own style, and overcome the difficulties of execution, Turner could have been wisely directed in the knowledge which ensures the permanence of a picture, and encouraged to produce an important but limited series of great works to illustrate what had most impressed him in all Europe, as the *Childe Harold* and *The Golden Bough* illustrate the landscape of Italy, he would have left

behind him the most magnificent of monuments and the best expression of his genius.

Mr. Vernon, who bought *The Golden Bough*, also bought a picture of Venice in the same Academy Exhibition, *Venice; the Canal of the Giudecca*, and he possessed another Venice of Turner exhibited in 1833. These Venices were afterwards succeeded by many others, for as Turner grew older, his increasing taste for brilliant colour led him to think more and more of that splendid city which excels all others so especially in her colouring. A city of rose and white, rising out of an emerald sea against a sky of sapphire, here, in a few words, are the chief elements of Venetian colour. It may interest the reader to see some notes by an observant writer who has lived much in Venice, but whose impressions are quite independent of Turner's, to whom he never refers, and whose work is probably all but unknown to him. M. Henry Havard, in his book on Amsterdam and Venice, has many descriptions of the city on the Adriatic from various points of view, descriptions always full of colour. Here are three or four of them.

1. *Venice from a Distance.*—Searching along the horizon, trying to penetrate the haze, we try to distinguish the marvellous city from the clouds in which she lies hidden. Suddenly above the green waters, in front of the blue mountains whose feet are lost in mist, we see her rise. She glitters in the midst of the islands which surround her. Her palaces of blue and white seem to float on the Adriatic. She reminds us of a necklace of pearls lying on a cloth of emerald velvet.

2. *A Nearer View.*—The forms do not yet appear with clearness and precision; there are no exact outlines, nothing but patches of rose and white which are relieved against a blue horizon of an exquisite softness and on the green waves which become silvery in the sunshine.

3. *Nearer Still.*—As we approach, all this delightful chaos becomes less confused; the campaniles detach their delicate profiles and the domes their obesity; the lace-like balconies and oriental roofs of the palaces are cut out more clearly, the outlines are more plainly visible, but the tones remain unchanged. The city preserves her tints of white and rose, the sky and sea their tints of blue and green.

The next description brings us within the city, and we see the great boats with their coloured sails, the stone quays, and the marble bridges, the red campaniles, the rose-coloured brickwork and the white marble, all close at hand. 'It is a marvellous concert of the richest colours, a clashing of the liveliest and most joyous tints.'

In the notes supplied by Mr. William Wyld for his biography in the *Portfolio* published in 1877, he gave a short description of Venice without having read M. Havard's book, and the two descriptions coincide exactly. After mentioning the advantages of splendid costume enjoyed by the Venetian painters as a daily spectacle in the public places, he went on to say:

'Then they had, too, the lovely Italian skies, and the shining silvery and rose-coloured palaces glancing in the

sun, which, with the emerald waters beneath, were always in readiness as backgrounds to their compositions.'

Most of Turner's Venice pictures are attempts to convey, not exactly the sensation of colour given by Venice itself, but an equivalent sensation; and although the Venices purchased by Mr. Vernon are already a wild extravagance in comparison with the sober but prosaic work of Canaletto, they were afterwards surpassed in their own direction by his latest Venices. He began to exhibit Venetian subjects in 1833, and continued, with intervals, till 1845. The whole of these pictures belong to his late manner, and some amongst them to his latest. The characteristics which they have in common are splendour of colour and carelessness of form; the colour being in most instances really founded upon the true Venetian colour as we have just seen it repeatedly described, but worked up to the utmost brilliance which the palette would allow, the forms simply sketched, exactly on the principles of the artist's own free sketching in water-colours. To get the brilliance the painter is believed to have adopted the following method, which has been used with success in copying his pictures of this class. It is believed, and with probability, that he first blocked out the picture almost entirely in pure white, with only some very pale tinting just to mark the position of the objects, and that this white preparation was thick and loaded from the beginning. On this he afterwards painted thinly in oil or water-colour, or both, so that the brilliance of the white shone through the colour and gave it that very luminous quality

which it possesses. This is simply a return to the early Flemish practice of painting thinly on a light ground, with this difference, however, that Turner made a fresh ground of his own between the canvas and his bright colours, and that the modelling of the impasto with the brush was done in this thick white. The result was to unite the brilliance of water-colour to the varied and rich surface of massive oil-painting.

The Venice pictures exhibited in the Academy from 1833, and now in the National Gallery, number in all eleven canvases. One of the finest of these, *The Sun of Venice going to Sea*, was etched by M. Gaucherel for the *Portfolio* in 1874, and published in the November number of that year. The etching has the spirit of the original picture, and is an excellent reminder for those who have seen it, but it can, of course, give no idea of the brilliant colour which is the principal artistic motive of the painting, and which is concentrated in the painted sail of the fishing-boat. An etching of *The Approach to Venice*, by M. Brunet-Debaines, appeared in the *Portfolio* for September, 1875. The subject is a view of the canal of the Giudecca, with Fusina in the distance. The reader may judge from this etching how Turner treated the materials of Venice, the spaces of the water, the boats, and the buildings. The sense of space and distance on water surface is admirably expressed in this subject; the boats are made to serve the artist's purpose in composition, both by the way he has placed them and by their reflections, and the buildings are treated in Turner's usual arbitrary manner with his disdain of architecture and topography. Some confusion has been created by

giving the title *The Approach to Venice* to a drawing from which a picture was painted which is called *San Benedetto*, whilst there is another picture called *The Approach to Venice*, which is in a state of ruin from technical causes. Whilst describing the *San Benedetto* picture, Mr. Ruskin says first that the title is a mistake, as no such church could be included in the view, and then he proceeds to recognise a general truth of Venetian character in it:

'The buildings on the right are also, for the most part, imaginary in their details, especially in the pretty bridge which connects two of their masses: and yet, without one single accurate detail, the picture is the likest thing to what it is meant for—the looking out of the Giudecca landwards at sunset—of all that I have ever seen. The buildings have, in reality, that proportion and character of mass, as one glides up the centre of the tide stream: they float exactly in that strange, mirageful, wistful way in the sea-mist—rosy ghosts of houses without foundations; the blue line of the poplars and copse about the Fusina marshes shows itself just in that way on the horizon; the flowing gold of the water, and quiet gold of the air, face and reflect each other just so; the boats rest so, with their black prows poised in the midst of the amber flame, or glide by so, the boatman stretched far aslope upon his deep-laid oar.'

The success of Turner's later method of colouring has been questioned by some critics, who seem to be especially offended by the crudeness of the whites. The following may be taken as a fair example of these criticisms; it is from an American writer who has travelled a good deal in Europe:

'In these pictures Turner appears to have departed from all those qualities which make his water-colours so valuable. There is nothing of Nature in them. Occasionally some familiar object is suggested; but there is no certainty, even after close study, of the motive, and scarcely of the form. With many, the time chosen—especially in the Venetian pictures—is when the sunlight is strongest, and we naturally fly from its glare. If his ambition were to rival Nature's intensest light, he has, as all painters must, signally failed. The pictures present glaring white surfaces, spotted with positive colours, laid on with a dash of the brush or the fingers, with little or no attention to form; an intense blue for the upper sky, but all colour opaque, and the canvas so heavily loaded that in many places the paint has dried, cracked, and *dropped* off. . . . We want luminous and liquid air, and not plain white or blue paint, which Turner has given. His skies are spotty and hard. They do not illuminate. The bright atmospherical colours should appear of prismatic tenderness of outline and texture, as in the rainbow, arching space. Solid pigments will not express the qualities of either sky, flesh, or water.'

Is this criticism just? It is, I think, not a bad piece of criticism. The writer has something to say, and does not simply confine himself to condemnation without giving his reasons. His eyes have been really offended by the style of painting which I have just endeavoured to describe, and he states the reasons for the offence. His feeling is one which I constantly observe in people who have some taste for art, but do not easily read its strongest language. For many years such people kept etching in a state of profound unpopularity because they were offended by its strength of expression, and even at

the present day they are angry at what is really the most powerful work. They look upon the fine arts as an imitation of nature, not as an utterance of human genius; and when the utterance reaches a certain pitch of intensity it seems to them a bad imitation—coarse and harsh and crude. The right theory was stated by Burger in 1863, when he said:

'In the works which interest us the authors substitute themselves, so to speak, for nature. However commonplace the natural material may be, their perception of it is special and rare. When Chardin has painted a glass, it is Chardin whom we admire in the glass which he has painted. It is the genius of Rembrandt which we admire in the profound and singular character which he has impressed upon the head, whatever it may have been which served him for a model. We think, "Ah! did they see like that, and how simple or how fantastic it is in expression and execution!"'

Now the mistake of the American critic is to have condemned the Venetian pictures of Turner because they are not imitations of nature. The question is not whether they are close imitations of nature, but whether they have the art-power of conveying a profound impression, and that they unquestionably have.

Some years ago several eminent French etchers came over to London for the purpose of executing plates from pictures in the National Gallery. They were all men of considerable experience in art, perfectly familiar with the old masters, and with as much modern art as may be seen in Paris; some of them were painters as well as etchers, and therefore practically acquainted with the

use of oil colour. Thus prepared, and eager to make acquaintance with our national collection, they went to Trafalgar Square. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect which the Turner pictures produced on their minds. It was not mere critical approbation, not merely the respectful attention usually given to a great master, it was the passionate enthusiasm with which highly educated and very sensitive persons acknowledge a new, strange, irresistible influence in the fine arts, the sort of enthusiasm which was awakened by the verses of Byron and the violin-playing of Paganini. All these Frenchmen, whatever had been their previous speciality in art—whether they had been etchers of the figure, or of architecture, or of landscape—asked to be employed in the interpretation of Turner; and the pictures which they most desired to etch were not those of what has been considered his sober, and sane, and orthodox time, but such things as the later Venices and those daring experiments in light and colour which have so often been spoken of as little better than the freaks of a gifted madman. Here, then, is evidence, if all other evidence were wanting, that these pictures have the one great power of all genuine works of art, as distinguished from simple imitations of nature, the power which excites and arouses the artistic susceptibilities.

Again, the offensiveness of what may be called technical excesses, such as excessive loading, for example, or the excessive fulness or richness of a glaze, seems to diminish in exact proportion to the artistic culture of the spectator. I mean that the partially cultivated spectator, such as the critic quoted above, will be offended by a

loading, and see in it nothing but thick paint, when a trained eye like that of M. Gaucherel or M. Brunet-Debaines will not be offended at all. I believe the reason to be that the one stops at the mere paint and the other goes at once far beyond it, to the artistic conception which the paint is intended to convey.

In 1835 appeared Macerone's edition of Milton, in seven volumes, and Tegg's one-volume edition of the poems, in foolscap octavo. Turner illustrated the poems for these editions with seven vignettes, which are generally considered, and rightly, amongst the least successful of his inventions. There is a certain materialism in Milton himself which a critical reader has considerable difficulty in reconciling with the nature of his subject, and yet it is easier to do this in reading a poem than in looking at a drawing, for the imagination is less exacting about material possibilities than the eye. One of the most unfortunate of the vignettes was the *Mustering of the Warrior Angels*, a mixture of unaccountable astronomy and bad figure-drawing, all rendered with that entire unsatisfactoriness which is the consequence of setting every natural law and possibility at defiance. Another lamentable attempt was *The Temptation on the Pinnacle*, a most difficult subject to treat, and treated in such a manner that one cannot venture to describe the drawing as it really is. These failures are the more provoking that Milton abounds in fine subjects for an imaginative landscape-painter. How suggestive, for example, are the lines:

> 'Far off from these, *a slow and silent stream*,
> Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
> *Her watery labyrinth.*'

And those, again, which follow almost immediately:

> 'Beyond this flood *a frozen continent*
> *Lies, dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms*
> Of whirlwind and dire hail.'

The best of the illustrations to Milton are the St. Michael's Mount, with the shipwreck of Lycidas, and the Ludlow Castle, with the rising of the water nymphs. Here the painter was brought down to the real earth and to his native land, and gained strength accordingly.

It was a custom of the classical school of landscape-painters to take subjects from the legends of antiquity, partly, no doubt, for the practical purpose of giving titles to their pictures, and also because the legends are in themselves poetical, and lend some poetry of association to the landscape with which the craft of the painter has connected them. Claude was fond of doing this, as we all know from the Claudes in our own National Gallery, almost all of which are associated with ancient legend or history. The story of Cephalus and Procris is a good one for this purpose, because the unhappy accident which ended fatally for Procris took place in a wood, and Claude delighted in sylvan subjects. The story of Mercury and Argus is, perhaps, even more available for the landscape-painter, as the cow, Io, must be introduced, and a cow is a landscape-painter's animal. Claude painted a picture of Mercury and Argus which was one of a pair, the other being *Juno entrusting to Argus the guardianship of Io*, and amongst Claude's etchings is one of Mercury and Argus, rather a pale etching, with a temple to the right, and a distant view of

a bay with hills beyond it, seen between two groups of trees.

Besides these works of Claude there are others in illustration of the same subject by the old painters; for example, Rubens painted it four times, as his taste for landscape and the naked figure, and his skill in both, gave him an interest in putting the two together. These examples, but especially that of Claude, may have induced Turner to try his strength on the same story; and whatever may be said of the cow and figures, it would be difficult, in elder art, to find it illustrated with such poetic feeling and such a happy mixture of natural and artistic beauty. It is to be regretted that the picture, which was purchased by Mr. Naylor, is not in the National Gallery, but it is widely known through the engraving, one of the most luminous of the larger plates ever executed from Turner's pictures. This work produced such a strong impression on Mr. Ruskin that he referred to it no less than nine times in 'Modern Painters.' Like Rubens, Turner introduced a rivulet in his landscape, finding its way over the irregular ground. This stream is well described by Mr. Ruskin in a few words:

'In coming down to us, we see it stopping twice in two quiet and glassy pools, upon which the drinking cattle cast an unstirred image. From the nearest of these the water leaps in three cascades into another basin close to us; it trickles in silver threads through the leaves at its edge, and falls tinkling and splashing (though in considerable body) into the pool, stirring its quiet surface, at which a bird is stooping to drink, with concentric and curdling ripples, which divide round the stone at its

farthest border, and descend in sparkling foam over the lip of the basin.'

The picture was one of the richest and fullest of those produced in Turner's complete maturity, the quantity of detail in it was immense, but detail fused and harmonised into unity. The sun is the centre of the picture, or nearly so, and the light brilliant. Great importance is given to foliage, especially to one great tree, which has the Turnerian pear-shape. I may observe that about this time of his career Turner had a fancy for a great tree, sometimes very much isolated. He probably found it convenient to throw back the sky and distance; and, by his system of aerial perspective, which confined the extreme darks to the immediate foreground, a tree did not cut so crudely against the sky as it does in ordinary drawing or in photographs. Turner had also, as I have explained elsewhere with reference to the fir on the left in *Crossing the Brook*, certain artifices in the treatment of such material which mitigated what might have been objectionable without them. Not only was the tree generally nearer in tone to the sky than it would have been in nature, but the branches farthest from the spectator, and consequently nearest to the sky, were made still paler in proportion as a compensation for stereoscopic effect, which painting cannot render. The general result of this artifice was that, however isolated a tree may be in one of Turner's landscapes painted in his maturity, it is never by any chance like an object *appliqué*, but forms an integral part of the material between the spectator and the horizon.

A magnificent instance of his treatment of trees when his art was fully developed is the picture of *Phryne going to the Public Bath as Venus.* I well remember how the combined grace and energy of the branch drawing in this picture seemed to me, before I knew the Forest of Fontainebleau, an idealisation of sylvan beauty beyond the possibilities of nature; and how, when I came almost directly from Fontainebleau to the National Gallery, I found in the picture the power, the freedom, the elegance which astonish us in the noblest Fontainebleau trees, and give the visitor to that wonderful place an entirely new conception of what sylvan magnificence may be. It is useless to expatiate farther upon the subject, for no conception of the trees in the *Phryne* can be given without illustration, and even that, on a reduced scale, would be inadequate, as the picture itself is more than six feet high, and drawn with such delicate modulation in all its curves that every inch of it is a study. Again, the most subtle etching or engraving would fail to render adequately the play of light in the foliage and amongst the branches, not to speak of the elaborate distances which are as full of material as they can be. The *Phryne* is certainly one of the very greatest pictures of Turner's full maturity. It was first exhibited in 1838, and shows signs of over-ripeness in the figures more than in anything else.

The decay of Turner's art was of a character quite peculiar to him. He is the only painter whose scheme of colour in the decline of life had a morbid tendency to white and scarlet—white for the light, scarlet for the shade—a combination as unnatural as it is glaring. You

may see this already in the figures of the *Phryne*, and to some extent they undoubtedly spoil the picture, but they will not prevent a cultivated critic from enjoying the work as a whole. Something, too, may be said in favour even of the figures themselves, defective as they may be. Their faults are of a kind which the popular eye easily detects, their merits are evident only to a few. They are well composed, they take their place in the picture, and add to the impression of life and splendour which is already partly created by the architecture of the baths. Besides this, as Mr. Ruskin has remarked, 'The infinitudes of gradation, and accurately reflected colour, which Turner has wrought into these strange figure groups, are nearly as admirable as the other portions of the work.'

In 1838 an incident occurred which throws some light both on Turner's policy in matters of business, and on the degree of success which attended one of the most important series of engravings from his works. In the biographical sketch by Mr. Alaric Watts, which was published in Bohn's edition, an account is given of a transaction in which Turner bought up a series of copper-plates —those of the 'England and Wales'—in order to prevent them from passing into the hands of a publisher, who might have worn them out and issued impressions of a quality injurious to the painter's reputation. The 'England and Wales' series had not been a commercial success, so the work was brought to an abrupt conclusion in 1838, and it was decided to sell off the stock and copper-plates, and balance the accounts. The whole was offered to Mr. Bohn, the publisher, for £3000, and he offered £2800,

but would not go any farther, so it was decided to put the property up to auction. 'After extensive advertising,' says Mr. Watts, 'the day and hour of sale had arrived, when, just at the moment the auctioneer was about to mount his rostrum, Mr. Turner stepped in, and bought it privately, at the reserved price of £3000, much to the vexation of many who had come prepared to buy portions of it.' Turner met Mr. Bohn at the sale, and told him, in his gruff way, that he had taken care to prevent him from selling cheap prints from the coppers, adding the expression of a general determination, 'No more of my plates shall be worn to shadows.' Mr. Bohn replied that his chief object was not the coppers, but the large printed stock. 'Oh! very well; I don't want the stock, I only want to keep the coppers out of your clutches.' So far mollified, the great artist positively went so far as to invite Mr. Bohn to breakfast the next morning, with a view of doing business. The publisher kept the appointment at nine, but there was no breakfast, and Turner asked as much for the impressions alone as he had just given for the impressions and coppers both together. This Mr. Bohn thought unreasonable, so he left the stock on the painter's hands. It remained at Queen Anne Street till after Turner's death, eating up interest and slowly deteriorating.

It is said that Turner visited Switzerland in 1838; but I am, as usual, unable to give the reader any details of his tour. The effect of Switzerland on his mind is much more visible in his sketches and water-colour drawings than in his oil pictures. In the whole catalogue of pictures exhibited by him at the Royal Academy and the British

Institution I only find three Swiss subjects: we all know how much more numerous are his Italian pictures. Notwithstanding the magnificence of Swiss scenery, it is not generally popular amongst artists, and a very experienced London picture-dealer told me that it is not popular amongst the purchasers of landscapes. In most cases a painter may shrink from Swiss scenery, simply because he finds a difficulty in dealing with its vastness; but vastness was one of Turner's strong points in art, and he drew mountains with great knowledge. The lake of Lucerne is said to have been one of the places which gained the strongest hold upon his affections, yet I believe he only exhibited one oil picture of it in the whole course of his life. The historic traditions of Italy seem to have drawn him strongly to Italian material, and the traditions of landscape art may have had the same effect. Claude, whom Turner imitated and emulated, painted Italian scenery, and so did the other classical landscape painters, but they never painted Switzerland. In 1838 and 1839 Italy was quite predominant in Turner's mind. In 1838 he exhibited *Ancient Italy—Ovid banished from Rome*, and *Modern Italy—the Pifferari*. In 1839 he followed up the idea by painting ancient and modern Rome under the following rather elaborate titles:

'ANCIENT ROME.—*Agrippina Landing with the Ashes of Germanicus. The Triumphal Bridge and Palace of the Cæsars restored.*

'"The clear stream,
Aye, the yellow Tiber glimmers to her beam
Even while the sun is setting."

'MODERN ROME.—*Campo Vaccino.*

'"The moon is up, and yet it is not night;
The sun as yet divides the day with her."—LORD BYRON.'

Besides these pictures there was one in illustration of Ovid (*Pluto carrying off Proserpine*), and one representing Cicero at his villa.

An etching, with aquatint, of the *Agrippina* was published in the *Portfolio* for February, 1878, and by its help the reader may easily follow what I have to say of the picture. It is fine composition of its class, giving a grand idea of the enormous palace of the Cæsars, in which Tiberius and Augusta remained invisible whilst the people of Rome received Agrippina with the most touching demonstrations of sympathy and sorrow. The architectural invention in the palace is not very elaborate, and it may be open to the criticism of architects, but the ideas of vastness, majesty, and a haughty domination are conveyed very impressively. The smaller masses are not altogether so fortunate; they have an arranged look, like the architecture in Martin's pictures; and one of them, that above the bridge, is in very bad perspective. The scene is lighted by slanting rays of sunset, which, with the cast shadows and the mist in the atmosphere, afforded Turner an opportunity for one of his poetical effects of light, shadow, and reflection.

The picture will not bear historical criticism. From the title which Turner gave it, he evidently believed (or supposed, intentionally, for his own convenience) that Agrippina landed at Rome. She really landed at Brundusium, and travelled to Rome by the Appian Way,

along which Drusus, with Claudius and the children of Germanicus, who were in Rome, went as far as Terracina to meet her. The whole description, as given by Tacitus, implies an imposing entry into Rome by land on an incomparably vaster scale than the few groups of figures in the picture. Turner, with his half-a-dozen people on the right, his four boats on the left, with people in balconies and on shore, renders the human interest of the scene so inadequately, that we are driven to imagine it over again for ourselves with the help of the Roman historian. There have been two great spectacles in modern times which may help us to some conception of the real event. When Nelson's remains were brought home to England from Trafalgar, when the body of Napoleon was brought to Paris from St. Helena, popular emotion in England and France did not express itself by loitering groups on the shores of the Thames and the Seine. The tide of humanity came out like a flood, by thousands and tens of thousands, filling the public place from side to side, the long avenue from end to end. Yet there was a poignancy of interest in the ancient event not equalled in either of the modern ones. Nelson died prematurely, but was not the victim of a murderer; Napoleon's ashes were not carried in an urn by a never-injured Josephine. Show us, O painter! the bereaved wife as she came 'bearing the funeral urn,' and the multitude in their fresh emotion, strangers and kindred, men and women, *recentes in dolore.*

In 1839 Turner illustrated Moore's novel, 'The Epicurean,' with four vignettes, *The Garden, The Ring, The Nile,* and *The Chaplet. The Ring* may be dismissed at

once as a wild fancy of a man swinging in the void, surrounded by diabolical apparitions, a subject authorised by the story, but not well chosen for illustration; *The Chaplet* is an interior of an Egyptian temple, not without sublimity; *The Nile* is an impressive moonlight scene on the river, with massive temples, stairs, and terraces; and *The Garden* is an attempt to realise the beauty of a garden of the Epicureans at Athens, with a lake down in the hollow, and a view of Athens, with the Acropolis beyond. There are statues in the garden, and boats full of pleasure-seekers on the lake; the whole scene glowing and glittering in the sunshine of a summer afternoon. This vignette and that of *The Nile* are quite sufficient evidence that, in spite of the failure with the Milton vignettes three years before, Turner still retained his remarkable skill in dealing with this kind of design. The vignette of *The Garden*, which only measures three and a half inches by four, is a striking example of the power by which Art can sometimes concentrate its materials. There is enough in it to fill a large drawing, and as for the expression of the artist's conception (which is the chief purpose of art), this is quite effectual. It transports us, I will not say to the real Athens, but to the Turnerian Athens, just as well as a large picture.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Téméraire.—The Bacchus and Ariadne.—The Snow-storm.—The Slave-Ship.—Latter years of Turner.—Pictures of 1842.—Tendency to the formless.—Dregs of life.—Last excursion on the continent.—Disabled.—Turner's death.—Funeral at St. Paul's.—Turner's care for his own fame.—Rivalry with Claude.

THE great work made public in 1839 was the *Téméraire* The entry in the Academy Catalogue is as follows:

'*The fighting Téméraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up*, 1838.'

'"The flag which braved the battle and the breeze
No longer owns her."'

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the obvious wilfulness in the lighting of this picture. With the sun and moon where they are, it would not be possible for the vessels to be so lighted; but this may be granted as a painter's license. Evidently Turner's object in this arbitrary lighting was to give the *Téméraire* a sort of ghostly, unearthly look, as if already more a melancholy vision of the past than any present reality. Turner, with his love of the sea and shipping, and his strong national feeling, took a deeply pathetic interest in the old war-vessels of the heroic time, the glorious days of Nelson; and we who of late years have seen so complete a revolution in the building of war-ships—a revolution unfavourable alike to

seamanship and to art—may admit that there were reasons for such regrets as Turner's deeper than any that he himself was aware of. Not only have the beautiful old war-ships almost entirely disappeared, but they have left no inheritors of their beauty. The same revolution which has replaced the proud castle of the middle ages by the low and ugly earthworks of modern fortification, has substituted for the glorious battle-ship, with her high freeboard, her tiers of guns, and magnificent display of canvas, a variety of inventions in which beauty is superseded by grim utility and seamanship by machines. War-ships in these days are not towed to their last rest at sunset, but suddenly sent to it by a thrust of a consort's snout.

The picture is, both in sentiment and execution, one of the finest of the later works. The sky and water are both magnificent, and the shipping, though not treated with severe positive truth, is made to harmonise well with the rest, and not stuck *upon* the canvas, as often happens in the works of bad marine painters. The sun sets in red, and the red, by the artist's craft, is made at the same time both decided in hue and luminous—always a great technical difficulty. Golden sunsets are easy in comparison, as every painter knows. This picture has more than once been associated by critics with the magnificent *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, which was painted ten years earlier. Both are splendid in sky and water, and both are florid in colour. Mr. Ruskin's opinion is that the period of Turner's central power, 'entirely developed and entirely unabated, begins with the *Ulysses* and closes with the *Téméraire*.' This

decade had been a time of immense industry for Turner. In that space he had made more than four hundred drawings for the engraver, had exhibited more than fifty pictures in the Royal Academy, and had executed besides some thousands of sketches, and probably many private commissions which cannot easily be ascertained. It was the decade during which he united a sufficient substance with poetry; after 1839 he retained poetic power, but his works became unsubstantial.

Mr. Thornbury, in his biography of Turner, informs us that the subject of the *Téméraire* was suggested to Turner by Stanfield.

'In 1838 Turner was with Stanfield and a party of brother-artists on one of those holiday excursions in which he so delighted, probably to end with whitebait and champagne at Greenwich. It was at these times that Turner talked and joked his best, snatching now and then a moment to print on his quick brain some tone of sky, some gleam of water, some sprinkling light of oar, some glancing sunshine cross-barring a sail. Suddenly there moved down upon the artists' boat the grand old vessel that had been taken prisoner at the Nile and that led the van at Trafalgar. She loomed pale and ghostly, and was being towed to her last moorings at Deptford by a little fiery, puny steam-tug.

'"There's a fine subject, Turner," said Stanfield.'

After the close of the Academy Exhibition of 1839, Turner decided never to sell the *Téméraire*. The picture was on what he called his two-hundred-guineas' size of canvas, and an amateur would willingly have given more than twice that sum, but Turner resolutely refused. He

probably intended the picture for the Turner-room in the National Gallery, as soon as he perceived its relative importance amongst his works.

Turner generally relied on his own resources even for the arrangement of his figure groups, but in the circular picture of *Bacchus and Ariadne*, which he exhibited in 1840, he frankly borrowed the principal figures from the noble picture by Titian. Little else need be said of the work, which is defective both in drawing and composition. The figures, though perhaps not quite so shapeless as those entirely invented by Turner, are less easily excused—perhaps because they remind us too directly of their too magnificent prototypes, and the composition is unsatisfactory because so obviously artificial.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon failures of this description, but this instance arrests one's attention, because it follows so immediately after the triumph of the *Témeraire*. The painter had often done work in former years which fell far below the level of his best, and this in a life of such incessant industrial production was inevitable; but former failures had always been succeeded by splendid recoveries of power, and were due far more frequently to an unlucky choice of intractable or uninteresting subject than to weakness in the artist himself. Now, however, at the age of sixty-four, the great painter really entered upon the period of his decline; a decline of which it may be truly said, that although it afforded ample opportunities for the cruelties of criticism, it proved, far more than the cautious advance of his early manhood, the essentially pictorial quality of his mind. For what in his last years did he retain, and what did the enfeebled hand

surrender? He retained colour, reflection, mystery—the qualities which only the most cultivated care for or apprehend; he lost the firm grasp of objects, which is, I will not say the infancy, but the early manhood of the pictorial art. The aspects of things are of far more consequence to a painter than the realities, and the more he works the less the actual substance affects him. For any one who understands what painting is, how it deals with appearance and not with substance, and how necessary, in order to paint well, it is to see the appearance and the appearance only, the later pictures of Turner are full of pathetic interest, and are far indeed from being either ridiculous or contemptible. I do not pretend that they always render the real appearances of nature, for they fall short of them in many ways, but they always aim at the appearance and never at the fact. Colour and shade, light and reflection, are the old painter's latest impressions and recollections of that world of mystery and beauty in which he had worked incessantly for fifty years. His very earliest work had been as matter-of-fact as possible; his latest is a vision of phenomena scarcely more substantial than the tail of a comet, the arch of a rainbow, or the crimson gleaming of the aurora borealis.

Let it not be supposed that those works of Turner's decline, however they may have exercised the wit of critics and excited the amusement of visitors to the exhibition, were ever anything less than serious performances for him. The *Snow-storm*, for example (1842), afforded the critics a precious opportunity for the exercise of their art. They called it soapsuds and whitewash, the real subject being a steamer in a storm off a

harbour-mouth making signals and going by the lead. In this instance nothing could be more serious than Turner's intention, which was to render a storm as he had himself seen it one night when the 'Ariel' left Harwich. Like Joseph Vernet, who, when in a tempest off the island of Sardinia, had had himself fastened to the mast to watch the effects, Turner, on this occasion, 'got the sailors to lash him to the mast to observe it,'* and remained in that position for four hours. He did not expect to escape, but had a curious sort of conscientious feeling that it was his duty to record his impression if he survived. The picture, then, was serious in purpose, and not an invention, but a recollection of real nature. Turner was much hurt by the soapsuds and whitewash criticism. 'He was passing the evening at my father's house,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'on the day this criticism came out; and after dinner, sitting in his arm-chair, I heard him muttering low to himself at intervals, "Soapsuds and whitewash!" again, and again, and again. At last I went to him, asking "why he minded what they said?" Then he burst out: "Soapsuds and whitewash! What would they have? I wonder what they think the sea's like? I wish they'd been in it."'

The Rev. W. Kingsley said that his mother, who had been in such a scene on the coast of Holland, was much struck with the truth of the *Snow-storm* when she first saw it in Turner's private gallery. I may bear witness to it also, having often been in rough weather at sea, and, on one occasion, in a real winter tempest, when the

* His own words to the Rev. W. Kingsley.

maintopmast was carried away and the sea-water swilled down into the engine-room, as nearly as possible extinguishing the fires. Being interested in art, and proof against sea-sickness, I have always employed such times in diligent observation of natural phenomena, and can say with truth that Turner's *Snow-storm* has always interested and never offended me; and that although it is not possible to imitate such phenomena as a Dutch painter would imitate a bucket of water, still, if not imitated, they are fairly and intelligently interpreted in the picture, however absurd it may appear to those who have no experience of the fury of nature or the difficulty of art. It may be answered that a painter has no right to attempt such impossible subjects; but who are we, to define and limit his right to paint? Effects which cannot be imitated may still, as in this instance, be interpreted; and a little knowledge, a little indulgence of goodwill on our part, a little help from our own memory and imagination, will complete what the artist of necessity left imperfect, and make us feel with him the grisly wildness of grim winter on the sea.

Another important sea picture of Turner's latter years was the *Slave-Ship*, exhibited in 1840, with the following title in the Academy Catalogue:

'*Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying. Typhoon coming on.*

> 'Aloft all hands, strike the topmasts and belay;
> Yon angry setting sun and fierce-edge clouds
> Declare the Typhoon's coming.
> Before it sweeps your decks, throw overboard
> The dead and dying—ne'er heed their chains.
> Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!
> Where is thy market now?'—*MS. Fallacies of Hope.*

This picture became the property of Mr. Ruskin, who wrote a fine description of the sea as Turner here represented it, and referred to the picture eleven times in 'Modern Painters.' He afterwards sold it, and it went to America. After being exhibited in New York in 1876, where it 'failed to make the impression expected,'* it went to Boston, where it created a great sensation and stirred up an eager and vehement controversy. A Boston correspondent was so kind as to send me some of the long letters published during this period of active hostilities, which proved that our American cousins can take a very lively interest in artistic matters. The following opinion, expressed by an intelligent and accomplished American artist, Mr. George Inness, is interesting for its frankness:

'Turner's *Slave-Ship* is the most infernal piece of clap-trap ever painted. There is nothing in it. It has as much to do with human affections and thought as a ghost. It is not even a fine bouquet of colour. The colour is harsh, disagreeable, and discordant.'

This is severe, and I think its severity is partly due to reaction against Mr. Ruskin's eloquent praises. On the other hand, I have observed that some Americans seem to think it a sort of duty to admire Turner, and to become enthusiastic about even his least important works. May I venture to observe, both to American and English readers, that nobody is under any obligation to admire either the late or the early works of Turner, that they

* This phrase is quoted from 'Harper's New Monthly Magazine.'

are as much open to criticism as those of any other artist, and that the best way to judge them fairly is to look at them as if they had never been either praised or censured. The warm controversy at Boston about the *Slave-Ship* was caused by a feeling of rebellion in some minds, too independent to accept dictation from an English critic, whilst others defended the picture as the work of a man of genius who had been roughly treated by the press. An antagonism of this description is good for the fame of an artist, because it makes everybody talk about him, but truth disengages itself only when the noise has ceased and the smoke of the battle has passed away. It is not of the least use to argue about colour. From Mr. Ruskin the colour of the *Slave-Ship* calls forth no harsher criticism than that he thinks 'the two blue and white stripes on the drifting flag of the Slave-Ship in the least degree too purely cold,' and he elsewhere expressly approves of its strongest passages. It is one of those compositions in which Turner used the most brilliant of all his pigments. A lurid splendour was his purpose, and he hesitated at nothing for its attainment. It is hardly possible for any painter to deal with vermilion and lemon-yellow, in any quantity, without falling into some degree of crudity. If you compare even the *Téméraire* with the rich deep harmonies of Titian and Giorgione, you will feel it to be relatively crude. But are fiery sunsets never to be painted?

Form may be argued about more positively. The wave forms in the Slaver are original, but they are, I believe, carefully observed. The comparatively flat or simply swelling space between the ridges of broken sea I

have often seen in nature, and the sudden leaping of the spray is no doubt also a reminiscence.' The introduction of the sharks, manacles, and human hand and leg, was artistically awkward to manage, and is so horrible that the mind revolts from these details. The thoroughness of study in the sky may be judged of by the rain-cloud engraved from it by Mr. Armytage, under the title *The Locks of Typhon.** Our sense of the delicacy of this piece of work may be heightened by the exquisiteness of the engraver's performance, but the painter must have worked delicately also.

The personal history of Turner during the latter years of his life is almost entirely devoid of interest. He lived exclusively for his art, unless we except his friendships; but even these, though warm, were not the occupation of every day, like his painting. He seems to have been glad to meet his friends occasionally, but not to have been dependent upon social intercourse as a daily necessity. The loss of Chantrey was a bitter grief to Turner. He had a fraternal and playful affection for 'that fat fellow' as he called him, and the sculptor's sudden death in November, 1841, left a great void in Turner's existence. It is said that when Chantrey lay dead his friend called to pay him a last visit, and finding Jones the Academician (whom he also loved) in the chamber of death, wrung his hand in silence and marched out of the house. The shock occasioned by this event probably did Turner harm, by putting him into low spirits, and predisposing him to morbid influences. He was very ill in the spring

* Published in the fourth volume of 'Modern Painters.'

of 1842, and was shaken by his illness, and had afterwards to live by rule.

The death of Wilkie had evidently impressed him also, for in 1842 he exhibited a picture, entitled *Peace—Burial at Sea*, now in the National Collection, to commemorate Wilkie's funeral, which had taken place in June, 1841, off Gibraltar, but at a distance from the shore. This picture was etched for the *Portfolio* by M. Brunet-Debaines.* It is square in shape, but in an octagon frame. Mr. Wornum tells an anecdote about Stanfield, who visited Turner's studio whilst the picture was on the easel, and rather complained about the blackness of the sails; to which the painter answered, 'If there were anything to be had in nature blacker than that I'd use it.' There can be no doubt of the substantial truth of the anecdote, but I remember (and made a note of it at the time) that Mr. Leslie told it me, with a slight difference, in Turner's Gallery in Queen Anne Street. He said that Stanfield's criticism was made in the Academy on a varnishing-day. 'You're painting the sails very black,' said Stanfield, and Turner answered, 'If I could find anything blacker than black I'd use it.' My impression is that this little colloquy was heard by Mr. Leslie himself. He was much impressed by Turner's remark, as indicative of his sorrow for Wilkie, and his determination to put the picture as much as possible in mourning.

In the same year (1842) Turner exhibited his Napoleon at St. Helena under the title, *War—the Exile and*

* This etching was published in that periodical for February, 1874.

the Rock Limpet. Napoleon is contemplating a limpet, and supposed to be pronouncing the following lines from the 'Fallacies of Hope:'

> 'Ah! thy tent-formed shell is like
> A soldier's mighty bivouac, alone
> Amidst a sea of blood . . . .
> . . . but you can join your comrades.'

This suggested to *Punch* 'The Duke of Wellington and the Shrimp (Seringapatam—Early Morning),' with the supposed quotation:

> 'And can it be, thou hideous imp
> That life is, ah! how brief, and glory but a shrimp!'

During these latter years of Turner's career as a painter, the wits amused themselves rather freely at his expense. It is said that he was acutely sensitive to these attacks, which is to be regretted, but I do not think the writers in *Punch* deserve any serious blame for the way in which it pleased them to exercise their talents. They laughed at Turner, it is true, but they laughed good-humouredly, and without malice. It is quite undeniable that there is a ludicrous side to some aspects of Turner's art, if you choose to see it; and although no critic with good feeling would laugh at an old painter's work if he knew that the jokes really wounded him, ridicule is generally a permissible weapon in art-criticism. Though Turner could joke with his friends, he resembled Milton in his lack of that keen sense of the ridiculous which saves from so many errors. It is hard to say why Napoleon, looking at a rock-limpet, should make us laugh, but there is a difficulty about taking Turner's picture seriously. Another odd instance of the mistakes

he sometimes made in dealing with the outer world was the picture of the *Bavarian Walhalla*, and what he did with it. The King of Bavaria had erected a building by the Danube, in the Doric style of architecture, to contain busts of eminent Germans. This temple of fame was opened in 1842, and Turner seems to have been impressed by what seemed to him King Ludwig's happy idea, so, by way of rewarding that sovereign, he painted a picture of the scene, packed it up in a case, and sent it to His Majesty as a free gift. The King, on receiving the picture, did not at all know what to make of it, and probably thought the painter was mad, or making game of him, so he ungratefully ordered it to be packed up again immediately, and sent back to the artist. Turner was never patronised by royalty, and this was the only occasion on which he himself attempted to patronise royalty. I need hardly observe that nobody with any talent for guessing the probable condition of another man's mind would have committed such a mistake as that. Considering what an outrage against topography and local truth the picture is, the King of Bavaria was the very last sovereign in the world to whom it could prudently be offered. It was inevitable that he should judge the work by its resemblance to a place which he knew intimately, and which the painter had never seen. As for the artistic charms of the Turnerian imagination, nobody but the initiated could be expected to appreciate them. This is but one instance the more of the great truth that imaginative artists ought not to deal with places that are too real.

The titles of Turner's later pictures are sometimes in

themselves a clear indication of the direction of his artistic thinking. For example, in the year when he exhibited the *Walhalla* there were two other pictures by him, entitled *Shade and Darkness* and *Light and Colour.* It is evident from these titles that the painter's attention was much more occupied by light and shade and colour than by the subjects of the pictures. This is what I have already remarked elsewhere with reference to the condition of Turner's mind in its latter years. It certainly lost its hold of substance, of objects, but it retained its hold of the artistic qualities of nature. It no longer valued form—or perhaps I ought to say that it was no longer capable of dealing with natural form—but colour and light it valued and appreciated still.*

The tendency to paint the formless was manifested in another of the later pictures, *Rain, Steam, and Speed—the Great Western Railway.* The title sufficiently indicates the intention of the artist, which was evidently to give the idea of 'Rain, Steam, and Speed,' much more than the portrait of a steam-engine or a view of the Great Western Railway. A painter who tries to express mental conceptions instead of copying matter always exposes himself to harsh treatment from a large class of critics, whose conception of art is realisation, and who have no indulgence for the art which does not realise.

* The full titles of the pictures mentioned in the above paragraph were, *Shade and Darkness—The Evening of the Deluge,* and, *Light and Colour (Goethe's theory)—The Morning after the Deluge—Moses writing the Book of Genesis.* Turner's exegesis seems to be at fault here, as Moses did not write the Book of Genesis on the morning after the Deluge. The titles of these pictures were accompanied by quotations from the unpublished 'Fallacies of Hope.'

Here is a specimen of this kind of criticism from an American book with reference to this very picture:

'The bridges are mere ghosts of substance. Both earth and water are equally destitute of quality. The sky is far more solid than the stonework. It has no luminosity whatever, but is actually falling to pieces from its own weight of paint. Even the locomotive, which should have the appearance of metal at least, is a mere phantom. The ironwork, which naturally suggests strength and opacity, is made of a thin glazing of black. In short, the artist has reversed the first principles of painting, leaving solids transparent, and making liquids solid, and pitching all upon so high a key as to offend the eye.'

I do not for a moment doubt the perfect honesty of this criticism, and it would be good criticism if it were true that the purpose of art is the imitation of nature. The plain truth is, that such things as locomotives and railways are absolutely inadmissible in painting of a high order except on condition of being sketched with what looks like an appearance of carelessness or ignorance. Turner's picture may offend some people by its scorn of material truth, but it would have offended every real judge of art far more if it had condescended to a slavish imitation of rails and a locomotive. I do not make this assertion as a mere guess or supposition. The experiment has been tried—I have seen it tried—by an English painter of eminence, who is now a Royal Academician. At a time when English art was looking out in various directions for new and unhackneyed material, this painter thought he would try what could be made of the rail-

ways, and very wisely, instead of trusting to the opinion of others, he put the question practically, by painting a locomotive from nature with as much care as if it had been a horse. The result was an interesting piece of handicraft, for a locomotive is a most difficult thing to paint: but the experiment settled the question for me; it convinced me that the hard materialism of mechanical things, by its incompatibility with sentiment, is unsuitable for fine art, and of the two steam-engines I infinitely prefer Turner's. I remember another case in point. Daubigny the landscape-painter was a very clever etcher, and yet, in one of his plates in the 'Voyage en Bateau,' he represented a railway train with the most careless inaccuracy. I can only say that his drawing was good enough for such material; it gave a notion of the train's length and speed, and that was about enough.

It is unnecessary to say anything of the very latest of Turner's pictures. All those exhibited after 1845 belong not merely to a period of decline, but to a state of senile decrepitude. It is, therefore, both a waste of time and an offence against decency to criticise them with the frankness which we rightly use in speaking of work done in the maturity of the human faculties; and as criticism which is not frank can serve no useful purpose, it is better to pass by these 'dregs of life and lees of man' in melancholy and respectful silence. The titles of the very latest pictures, those exhibited in 1850, have a certain interest from their fidelity to classic subjects of the old-fashioned kind, that belonged to the landscape art which preceded Turner, and on which his own was founded. We find him still, in 1850,

thinking about Æneas, and Dido, and Mercury, still quoting verses from the 'Fallacies of Hope,' in which old Troy is mentioned. One of the subjects is *Mercury sent to admonish Æneas;* another, *Æneas relating his Story to Dido;* and a third, *The Departure of the Trojan Fleet.* It is remarkable, too, that with a melancholy dwelling on death natural to one who felt his strength ebbing away from him, Turner should have exhibited in that last year a picture entitled *The Visit to the Tomb.*

During the latter years of Turner's life, the only event which broke the monotony of his daily work appears to have been an excursion on the Continent (probably in 1843), during which he made his last sketches of a place very dear to him, the glorious lake of Lucerne. I can only repeat, with reference to this excursion, what has already been said about others; namely, that the absence of correspondence and diaries, and the solitude of the traveller, leave us without material for any narrative. Turner recorded himself in his art, but in his art only, and the sketches of a landscape-painter can preserve little trace of the vicissitudes of his life. It would be simply a waste of space to speculate on travels of which so little is known to us, but we may better understand the peculiar nature of Turner's life on the Continent by a contrast. Think of Byron and Shelley in Switzerland and Italy, always heightening their enjoyment of what they saw by conversations with people who could understand them, living with nature and humanity at the same time, writing also their impressions in abundant letters addressed to friends at a distance; and then think of Turner, old and solitary, going silently from lake to lake, from

city to city, ignorant of the languages of the countries in which he sojourned, shunning his own countrymen when he met them, writing hardly ever, and then so curtly that his letters express no thoughts: and yet he, too, was a poet; a silent brother of those who wrote 'Childe Harold,' and 'Endymion,' and 'Alastor.'

One of the pictures of his old age, exhibited in 1844, under the title, *Fishing Boats bringing a Disabled Ship into Port Ruysdael*, seems to foreshadow, like the *Téméraire*, that approaching condition of helplessness which Turner looked forward to with a sad foreboding. The evening of his life had begun, and was rapidly deepening towards the night. He kept up, however, pretty well until the year 1851, when he ceased to exhibit, and no longer attended the meetings of the Royal Academicians, which had formerly been greatly valued by him as an opportunity for the kind of social intercourse most congenial to his feelings. David Roberts wrote to him, and begged to be allowed to see him, but got no answer to his letter during the space of a fortnight, after which Turner himself called on Roberts at his studio, and promised to call again whenever he came to town.' The following is the account of the interview given by David Roberts himself:

'I tried to cheer him up, but he laid his hand upon his heart and replied, "No, no; there is something here which is all wrong." As he stood by the table in my painting-room, I could not help looking attentively at him, peering in his face, for the small eye was brilliant as that of a child, and unlike the glazed and "lack-lustre eye" of age. This was my last look. The rest is soon told. None of his friends had seen him for months;

indeed I believe I was the last, together with his friend George Jones, who I afterwards learned had that day also called upon him.'

A much stranger thing than Turner's absence from the meetings of the Academicians was his absence from his own home. His old housekeeper, Mrs. Danby, was in painful anxiety about the place of his retreat, and discovered it by accident. 'One day,' says Mr. Thornbury, 'as she was brushing an old coat of Turner's, in turning out a pocket, she found and pounced on a letter directed to him, and written by a friend who lived at Chelsea. Mrs. Danby, it appears, came to the conclusion that Turner himself was probably at Chelsea, and went there to seek for him, in company with another infirm old woman. From inquiries in a place by the river-side, where ginger-beer was sold, they came to the conclusion that Turner was living in a certain small house close by, and informed a Mr. Harper whom she and Turner knew. He went to the place and found the painter sinking. This was on the 18th of December, 1851, and on the following day Turner died.

It is said that he died with the sun of the winter morning shining upon his face. 'The attendant drew up the window-blind, and the morning sun shone on the dying artist.' We naturally seek for some poetic circumstance to accompany the death of a poet, but this ray of morning sunlight is all we have in Turner's case. The history of his last days has the kind of interest which is sought after by novelists rather than that which inspires the most touching verses of the poets. It is a subject for Dickens rather than for the mournful singer of Adonais.

Turner, with that love of secrecy which had always been one of his characteristics, and which in later years had become a passion, had gone to hide himself in some corner of London, where not one of his friends might find him. He had discovered a small house at Chelsea kept by a Mrs. Booth, and had settled there as a lodger, calling himself Mr. Booth, and in the neighbourhood he was known as 'Admiral Booth,' for the people really believed him to be an impoverished old naval officer. All this is excellent material of the kind that Dickens made use of. The rich old man, the famous painter, leaves a home where he could procure for himself all the comforts or luxuries he cared for ; quits the society of his fellows, where his wealth and fame were acknowledged by every one ; hides his wealth under an appearance of decent poverty ; conceals his celebrity under an unknown name ; abandons even the affection of those who had some feelings of attachment towards him, his old housekeeper, the group of his old comrades and friends, and goes to await his end in a hired lodging, to be tended by a woman who was a recent acquaintance, and in whose eyes his principal, perhaps his only merit, was his ability to pay his expenses. What is the use of all the things for which men weary their brains with toil if towards the close of life they are to be cast aside as vanities ? What is the good of troubling ourselves about wealth, and reputation, and friendship, if a day is to come when we shall prefer obscurity to fame, solitude to society, and simplicity to splendour ?

'Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better ?'

'For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?'

The temporary obscurity of the dying man was succeeded by a full glare of publicity for the dead. He was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral with some considerable pomp and ceremony. Many famous painters and men celebrated in other departments of the fine arts, some who loved art and encouraged it, and others who had felt for the great painter some personal affection with which the fine arts had no concern, followed him to his last resting-place. The hearse was preceded to the Cathedral by a long procession of mourning-coaches and private carriages. When the coffin was taken into the building the choristers chanted the Dead March in 'Saul,' and the service was read by Dean Milman. It appears from the contemporary account in the *Times* that a considerable crowd was attracted outside by the ceremonial, and about five hundred persons were present in the aisles and the chapel.

It can matter little where the stiffened hand and the sightless eyes of a dead landscape-painter may rest from their pleasure and their toil. For some, who have loved sylvan nature truly, it may be appropriate that the 'shadows of the silver birk,' or of some other beautiful or noble forest tree of their native land, should 'sweep the green that folds their grave;' that light and shadow should 'ever wander' over it, that rain should make music in the tree, and the woodbine and eglatere drip their dews, and the brooding bee chaunt sweeter tones

than calumny. There are many humble nature-loving landscape-painters for whom such a grave would be most fitting; others should rest beneath the immemorial oaks of Fontainebleau, or in the recesses

> 'Of the deep forest glades of Broceliande,
> Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
> Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.'

For Constable we feel that Hampstead Churchyard was suitable, as he loved the place, but that a quiet churchyard in his own Suffolk would have been more suitable still. Gainsborough sleeps well in the little green at Kew, Millet and Rousseau in a little village cemetery nearest to their own humble Barbizon. Why should not Turner have been laid in some place where Nature is beautiful, and where he had studied lovingly—in that valley of the Wharfe, for instance, which he could never revisit without tears? The answer to such suggestions is that he lies in the place chosen by himself, the place most suitable to his character, and in reality also to his preferences and pursuits. Of all painters known to us he was, if not the most ambitious, certainly the one whose ambition was the least concealed. To lie under the great Cathedral, by the side of Reynolds, gratified his ambition more than to take his rest in the prettiest churchyard in Yorkshire. Again, he was only occasionally, and as it were by chance, a rustic painter. London was his birth-place, the dome of St. Paul's had been a familiar object to him from his infancy, and he had drawn or painted cities from his earliest youth. Even the very architecture of St. Paul's is in harmony with the painter's

classical taste and associations. He drew Gothic architecture when he had to deal with it as a matter of business in a view of some English or French city, but whenever he had to *invent* architecture for one of his composed pictures it was invariably classical.

It is characteristic of Turner's care for his own fame that he left by will a thousand pounds for a monument to himself in St. Paul's. This monument has taken the form of a statue by MacDowell, and it is therefore often believed that Turner decreed a statue to himself. There is, however, a shade of distinction between the general preoccupation about a monument and the definite ordering of a statue, and it is probable that Turner, who had always refused to allow his brother-artists to take his portrait, did not foresee that a statue would be the consequence of his bequest. I may observe, too, that the bequest itself implies a curious mixture of modesty and its opposite. Turner was always modest enough to feel strong doubts about the care which others would have for his posthumous fame. He seems to have thought, 'If I don't take care of my fame myself, by doing all I can to fortify it, nobody else will do so, and it is likely to be extinguished.' This is rather a modest sentiment; but then, on the other hand, it was accompanied by this other feeling about himself,—'I am great enough to deserve to be remembered, and will take good care that people shall remember me whether they will or not.' He had not the slightest trace of that truest pride, that best dignity which scorns the honour that is not freely given. He clung to fame as all that would remain to him or of him after death, and resolved so to bequeath his posses-

sions in pictures and money that they might perpetuate his memory amongst men. Even the charitable project in aid of decayed artists, by which the bulk of his fortune was to give comfort in their old age to his brethren who had been less prosperous than himself—even this charitable project, which in itself deserves nothing but gratitude and honour, was tarnished by the donor's perpetual anxiety about the preservation of his name. He expressly stipulated in his will that the charity was to be called 'Turner's Gift,' as if in needless apprehension that the trustees might forget to mention him in connection with it. He was equally careful to stipulate that the pictures he bequeathed to the nation were to be exhibited in rooms of their own, and that these rooms were to be called 'Turner's Gallery.' Again, instead of simply leaving money for a medal to be given for the best landscape exhibited at the Academy every two or three years, leaving the title of the medal to be fixed by the Academicians, he takes care to settle beforehand that the medal shall be called 'Turner's Medal.' Observe, too, the anxiety to ensure perpetuity to the gifts which bear his name. They were not donations to be once made and then forgotten. The National Gallery is the most permanent exhibition in the country. Unless it is burnt or sacked by Communards of a possible democratic future it will last with the civilisation of England. 'Turner's Gallery' will thus be visited by unnumbered generations. Again, the project of the charitable gift was to endure as long as there were any artists to be helped in their old age. Lastly, the medal is to be given as long as landscapes are exhibited at the Academy.

Who does not see that the purpose of the triple scheme, like that of the monument in St. Paul's, is to perpetuate the name of Turner?

But there is another clause in the will, of which the intention is equally plain, whilst the conception is more audacious and original. After bequeathing to the Trustees of the National Gallery the two pictures, *Dido building Carthage*, and the picture formerly in the Tabley Collection, the testator goes on to impose a certain condition about the hanging of these works which is, I believe, without a parallel in the history of Art. 'I direct that the said pictures or paintings shall be hung, kept, and placed, that is to say, always between the two pictures painted by Claude, the *Seaport* and *Mill*.' This was an error of judgment in many ways. To begin with, it is always a mistake to suppose that two great artists can be compared with anything like a satisfactory critical result, for the simple reason that originality is an essential part of greatness, and that two originalities are not proper subjects of comparison. You may compare a strawberry with another strawberry very reasonably, or a peach with another peach, and give a prize to the one that had the finer flavour, with little misgiving as to the justice of your decision; but the comparison of peach with strawberry would inevitably be an unsatisfactory exercise of criticism. Amongst painters you might well compare two imitators of one artist, and decide which imitator had mimicked the master most closely. For example, if Turner and Calcott had set themselves the one object of imitating Claude, it would be easy to decide which of the two Englishmen had produced the

cleverer *pastiche*, and in such a case it would be a reasonable proceeding to hang a Turner and a Calcott on each side of a Claude which had been their model. Turner learned a great deal, no doubt, from Claude, and to some extent he imitated him in his early manhood, whilst he remembered him through life; the influence of Claude being still quite distinctly visible even in such late works as *Bay of Baiæ* and the *Childe Harold*. But the essential greatness of Turner lies precisely in what is outside of Claude's range, and cannot be compared with him. It is like comparing Byron with Pope. There are *parts* of Byron's works which may be compared with Pope, and the influence of Pope is visible in the clear, strong language that Byron always preferred; but you cannot really compare the two men when they are not on common ground. Turner's intention may, however, have been rather to invite comparison between particular work than to suggest a general comparison between the two artists. In that case the error of judgment is still more palpable. Claude's field was a narrow one. Though he lived long, and covered many canvases, he seems to have had but few artistic ideas, and the very paucity of these enabled him to realise them with all the greater perfection. Turner was vast in range and very unequal; Claude, narrow in range, but remarkably regular in the degree of his technical success. Now, what Turner did was this: he, a man of wide range, attempted to contend with a man of narrow range, on one of the narrow man's own private specialities. He invited a comparison between his seaport with classical architecture called *Dido building Carthage*, and Claude's seaport with

classical architecture, known as the *Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba.* The mistake of inviting such a comparison is visible almost at the first glance. The Claude is light, fresh, full of atmosphere, and that lively, inspiriting feeling which takes possession of us when a pleasant breeze and transparent waves invite us to sail out upon the sea; the Turner is heavy, and though, in a certain sense, imposing and magnificent, is entirely wanting in freshness. As to the Tabley picture (*The Sun Rising in Mist*), and Claude's *Mill* (*The Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca*), the critic is embarrassed by the impossibility of comparing two absolutely dissimilar works. The Turner is a northern seascape, seen from the shore, near a jetty; British all through, from the men-of-war in the distance to the fishermen on the sand; the very atmosphere, which the sun penetrates with difficulty, being foggy and British also: the Claude (notwithstanding Isaac and Rebecca) is in reality an extensive Italian landscape, in clear daylight, with massive and graceful groups of trees. There is not a tree in the Turner, there is not a sail in the Claude. Turner has painted fog, and Claude a clear atmosphere. The sun is in Turner's picture, and it is out of Claude's. So we have to compare sails with trees, and the sea with an inland landscape, and the sun with a summer cloud, and a mill with a man-of-war. May the critics of future generations get much benefit by these comparisons!

There is another aspect of this bequest which forces itself upon our attention—its want of modesty. The rank of a painter is not determined by his merit but by his fame, whatever may determine that. The fame of

Claude was, and is, prodigious. It is not enough to say that his fame in landscape is equal to that of Raphael in figure-painting, because Raphael has great rivals in his department of art; and Claude, as a painter of the beauty and amenity of landscape, had a celebrity which until quite recently was considered to be absolutely above all possibility of rivalry, and which is still so considered by nearly all the connoisseurs of continental Europe. The reader will please to observe that I am speaking, not of merit, which is a questionable and doubtful thing, but of fame, which is an ascertainable thing. For two centuries Claude's position has been considered unquestionable; his name has been known to every human being who tried to sketch a landscape, however humbly, as that of the supreme sovereign of the art; it has passed into all literatures, so that every writer who spoke of landscape beauty thought of him as he thought of Salvator in connection with landscape sublimity. The fame of Claude is, indeed, so closely associated with landscape throughout Europe, that if you know anything whatever about art, if you have visited a gallery of any importance, or read the shortest and most meagre history of painting, you are sure to have heard of him as you are sure to have heard of Raphael. Now suppose for one moment that some contemporary Frenchman, some very able and clever man, were to leave two figure-pictures to the Louvre on condition that they should be hung between two Raphaels, what would all Europe say? Simply that the Frenchman was mad. And just so M. Viardot, in perfect good faith, takes Turner's bequest as clear evidence of madness.

'One is still more surprised on seeing this historical landscape of Turner placed between the two finest works of the Lorrainer, the *Mill* and the *Queen of Sheba;* and our surprise redoubles when we learn that the picture is so placed by the order of Turner himself, who required this position for his pictures as the express condition of their entrance into the National Gallery. I will not seek any other proof of the state of insanity in which he ended his life. Everybody knows that pride is the most common cause of madness.'

This is what comes of measuring yourself with a great established celebrity; your presumption is considered evidence of insanity. It is certainly clear evidence of a mental condition in which self-admiration had blinded its victim to the true proportions of things. Claude had an incomparably magnificent European position; Turner nothing but a rising celebrity in his own country. Even at the present day Turner's name has little weight on the Continent, where he is generally considered a more or less successful imitator of the old masters, who became original only when he lost his reason.

CHAPTER XV.

Celebration by Mr. Ruskin.—Ruskin's 'Modern Painters.'—Mr. Ruskin's literary powers.—Mr. Ruskin and the English public.—Mr. Ruskin not the discoverer of Turner.—Criticism and art in words.—The love of effect.—Circumstances of Turner's death.—Mr. Ruskin's estimate of Turner.—Turner and Pre-Raphaelitism.—The criterion of truth.—Distinction between nature and art.—Turner's position in art.—Mystery.—Turner's colour.—Turner's imagination.—Taste.—Résumé.—Danger of Turner-Worship.—Past and future of landscape painting.

I HAVE attempted to mark the distinction between artistic rank, which is simply fame, and merit, which depends upon faculty and labour. I reserve for a later page an attempt to estimate the total value of Turner's work. It has been considered part by part, as he produced it, in the course of this biography. We have still to consider broadly what he performed, and what he left undone.

Before we come to that I have to repair an omission which was made purposely, in order not to interrupt the course of the narrative. I have observed on several occasions, that in most things which related to his art Turner was one of the most fortunate of men. Good luck attended him—not always as a man, but almost invariably as an artist—from his earliest youth to the latest decade of his life. His father encouraged instead

of thwarting his genius in boyhood. The Exhibition Rooms of the Royal Academy were open to him from the age of fifteen; at the age of twenty-five he was made an Associate, and at twenty-seven a Royal Academician. His fame was spread abroad by the most accomplished group of engravers who ever interpreted a landscape-painter. At a very early age he could earn enough to permit him to devote half his time to art for art's sake, in complete independence of the buyer, and before middle life he was independent, if he chose, from January to December. Even the misfortunes which happened to the man were generally favourable to the development of the artist. The failure of his marriage project drove him to a laborious solitude, and left him that liberty of movement which enabled him to ransack Europe for the subjects most favourable to his genius and the advancement of his fame. With all his success there was the drawback that a frivolous public and a periodical press, but little instructed in matters connected with the fine arts, permitted themselves to make fun of his originalities. Here, again, the annoyance was followed by a splendid compensation. The sneers of a portion of the public, and the sarcasms of the newspapers, brought a champion into the field who worshipped Turner with a devotion such as no other artist ever excited in his admirers, and who expressed his feelings with an energy and an ability far surpassing the powers of all previous writers upon Art.

Remember old Montaigne's definition of fame. 'There is the name and the thing: the name is a voice which denotes and signifies the thing; the name is no part of

the thing, or of the substance; 'tis a foreign piece joined to the thing, and outside of it.'

The *thing* in the case of an artist is the mass of his actual production, the *voice* which denotes and signifies the thing is the voice of the talkers and writers about Art.

Every artist knows that there are qualities in his work which would become famous, if only 'the voice' would be good enough to 'denote and signify the thing.' The work is one thing, the fame another, as Montaigne says, and outside of it. 'The name is no part of the thing, or of the substance.' It follows that, after having made the thing, the artistic product, the paintings, the artist has done his part, and has to wait patiently for the 'voice' to 'denote and signify the thing' to the world at large. Some, like Franz Hals, have had to wait two hundred years before the voice spoke audibly; even the Great Captain and King, William III., remained more than a hundred and forty years in his grave, before Macaulay's splendid eloquence made him shine with his full lustre in the immortalising pages of history. Turner found *his* Macaulay during his own lifetime.

Mr. John Ruskin was the only son of a wealthy London wine merchant, who knew Turner, and had bought some of his pictures. He had been educated privately and at Oxford, and his education had included some instruction in practical art, under Harding and Copley Fielding. This simple statement might, however, very easily convey a false impression, because many amateurs have studied water-colour under those masters, without acquiring any very deep insight into artistic matters. Mr. Ruskin had

a peculiar and very precocious talent of a practical kind, consisting, not in the power of composing brilliant pictures, but in the less ambitious accomplishment of making very precise, delicate, and truthful studies. Armed with this useful talent, and having naturally an intense enjoyment of both nature and art, and the modern landscape-passion in all its energy, Mr. Ruskin travelled in youth and early manhood, observing everything with a keen and intelligent curiosity. He soon became familiar with the principal classes of scenery which Turner had represented, both in Great Britain and on the Continent, and at least equally familiar with the works of Turner's most famous predecessors, which are preserved in the galleries of Europe. The general result of these comparisons and investigations may be briefly expressed in a sentence. The young student and traveller became profoundly convinced that Turner's work displayed an unprecedented fulness of knowledge, whilst that of his predecessors in landscape painting was an effort of at least relative ignorance and incapacity.

With this conviction, and a strong feeling of indignation at the inadequate manner in which the periodicals of the day treated the genius of Turner, Mr. Ruskin, at the age of twenty-three or twenty-four, determined to take up the pen in defence of his favourite artist, and to write, in the form of a short pamphlet, a letter to the editor of a Review, about what seemed to him the 'shallow and false criticisms' then current in the newspapers and magazines. Before the letter to an editor had left the desk of the writer, it had expanded itself into a volume, and before the writer had fully accomplished his purpose,

the book grew into a great work, in five volumes, accompanied by various auxiliaries in the shape of pamphlets, lectures, and other minor works. The great work was entitled 'Modern Painters,' but the author's original intention had been to call it 'Turner and the Ancients,'—much more appropriately, as Turner is the only modern painter spoken of at any length, his English contemporaries, when spoken of at all, being dismissed in a sentence or a paragraph, whilst the reader may seek in vain for any account of modern continental art. The change of title was suggested by the desire to obtain a more extensive circulation. Many, it was thought, might like to hear about modern painters, who cared little about Turner and the ancients.

The book had really two main subjects. It was a treatise on the aspects of natural landscape, and at the same time a vigorous advocacy of Turner. The first and second volumes were published during the painter's lifetime, and probably read by him. Notwithstanding the intensity of his passion for fame, the enthusiasm of his young admirer seemed excessive to Turner, who constantly tried to prevent him from writing, from a belief that such excessive praise must hurt the feelings of other artists. The truth is that Turner, all through the book, appears as the giant, and other modern painters, however eminent their abilities, are put by his side occasionally, to let us see his superior height and bulk, when compared with ordinary humanity, after which they are unceremoniously dismissed. I may add that Mr. Ruskin began by publishing his first volume anonymously, not because he shrank from any responsibility, but on account of the

writer's youth, which, had it been known at first, would probably have brought down upon him the contempt of people who please themselves by assuming that age and wisdom are identical.

Notwithstanding Turner's objection to being over-praised, it was a most extraordinary piece of good fortune for him that Mr. Ruskin should have become his advocate. No painter, since the world began, ever had such an advocate before, and there are excellent reasons for believing (I will give some of them shortly) that no painter will ever have such an advocate in the future.

The reader, after this rather strong expression in Mr. Ruskin's favour, may perhaps conclude that in my opinion he is the best critic who ever was or will be. No, that is not what I mean. Mr. Ruskin shows little of the critic's faculty, and is seldom in the really critical temper for any length of time together; but he is a splendid artist in words, and down to the present date he is the only artist in words, of any conspicuous power, who has written much, and with his best force, about painting.

My reasons for believing that in the future no painter will ever have such an advocate again, are founded upon the natural movement (I do not say progress) of the human mind. Without burning enthusiasm a Ruskin is not possible, and enthusiasm itself, in that degree, is possible only in the first freshness of national perception about art. Anything like extensive critical experience kills it. It is absolutely impossible, for example, that a Ruskin should arise in France, because all artistic questions have lost their freshness there from too much discussion, and for the same reason it is now becoming

impossible that a second Ruskin should arise in London. But there are other reasons why the appearance of such a writer upon art could only occur at the time and in the place when and where it actually did occur. The English public was at that time admirably prepared by the great authors of the earlier part of the century for the enjoyment of first-rate literature, and being, at the same time, with all its faults, essentially the most modest, the most patient, and the most teachable public in Europe, it was quite ready to accept instruction on a subject like art, of which it felt that it knew much less than it did of literature. Again, Mr. Ruskin appealed to the English love of truth. Previous writers upon art had dwelt much less on truth than on style, and on those artifices of arrangement which the ordinary Englishman feels strongly inclined to despise as tricks of trade, about which no one but 'the artist and his ape' need trouble himself. The appeal to the truth of nature would have been met at once, in France, by the answer that art and nature were two entirely different things, and that the artist could at any time escape from the criterion of truth by claiming the artistic license, by virtue of which he is authorised to alter nature in compliance with the exigencies of art.

The beginning of Mr. Ruskin's advocacy of Turner depended upon himself, but the continuation of it depended on the public. Had the public turned a deaf ear, the new teacher would have turned his attention to other matters, and the first volume of 'Modern Painters' would have remained alone, a singular monument of a young man's energy and courage. The public, however, listened so willingly, that the first volume, originally

published in 1843, reached its fifth edition in 1851, and the second, which first appeared in 1846, reached its third edition in 1851. An audience being thus assured, the writer had only to go on, and as he had ample means at his disposal, with perfect freedom from commercial or professional avocations, habits of steady industry, and the strongest possible interest in artistic questions, he made it his business to learn and teach what seemed to him the truth about art, and especially to place the fame of Turner on what he considered a sound and unshakeable basis.

Nothing could have been more prudent in the beginning of Mr. Ruskin's long battle on behalf of Turner than the appeal to the English love of truth, a love which is always strong in theory, though in practice it may be remarked that our countrymen often prefer fiction to truth, and have even a strong tendency to the fictitious, by a certain necessity of their imagination.* Mr. Ruskin's first argument was of this kind: 'You say Turner is not true to nature. I will first give you good evidence that he *is* true; that he is truer than Claude and Salvator and Gaspar Poussin ever were; and then at some future time we will talk about beauty and sublimity.' This line of argument was addressed to a certain state of the public mind, and proved successful. Mr. Ruskin did not succeed in proving that Turner was veracious, but he gave the public some idea of the painter's enormous knowledge. If the public of those days, and the brilliant young Oxonian who addressed them, had really understood the peculiar nature of poetic art, they would both have at-

* As in legal and constitutional fictions, social fictions, etc., etc.

tached much less importance to truth, and his elaborate investigation of the truth of nature would probably, if undertaken at all, have been undertaken simply as an independent contribution to a new science, the science of natural aspects, with very secondary reference to art. Poetic art is strangely independent both of science and of veracity, and plainly, in its own way, refuses to be tested by science, and even by reason. It is indeed as nearly as possible useless to apply these tests to art except for the critic's own personal education or amusement, as the artist can always so easily escape from them. He has only to say that he did the thing because the picture seemed to require it, and there is an end of reasoning. This was forcibly and justly expressed by Henri Regnault in a letter from Rome. 'If one were to reason about painting, one would not dare to do anything. If you choose to reason before the works of the masters, you will find many things which have no *raison d'être*, and which are where they are because they do well there. Art should obey sentiment above all, and not fear to set exactness and reason at defiance.' Again, he said with an admirable sense of what art really is: 'Our law, the law for us artists, is not good sense but fancy; and if something absurd does well, I see no reason why we should decline to make use of it.'

There are passages in Mr. Ruskin's works which seem to imply that in his own opinion his writings revealed Turner to the world, and these have been answered by the clearest evidence (exceedingly easy to get together) that Turner was a famous and successful man long before the publication of 'Modern Painters.' It may even be

shown, by a simple comparison of dates, that Turner had been a Royal Academician about seventeen years when Mr. Ruskin was born, and no artist is ever elected to that rank unless he is highly esteemed by his brethren. Dayes said of Turner in 1804 (fifteen years before Mr. Ruskin's birth): 'He has overcome all the difficulties of the art, so that the fine taste and colour which his drawings possess are scarcely to be found in any other, and are accompanied with a broad, firm chiaroscuro and a light and elegant touch.' From this and several other opinions which I shall have to quote in reference to another subject, it is abundantly evident that Mr. Ruskin was not the discoverer of Turner; but at the same time a certain aspect of the matter has to be taken into consideration which may partially explain and excuse his impression. I requested an artist who had known the state of the fine arts in England for more than fifty years to tell me what he believed to be the exact truth about Mr. Ruskin's discovery of Turner, and his answer (as nearly as I can remember) was in these words: 'Turner's merits were perfectly well known to artists and to a few amateurs long before the publication of "Modern Painters;" but in those days the general public never talked about him, whereas since that book came out the general public talks about him, and takes a sort of interest in his work.'

I have said that Mr. Ruskin was less a critic than an artist in words. This, again, was most fortunate for Turner's fame. Real criticism is seldom attractive reading. Poetry and eloquence transport and delight the reader, criticism seldom does anything more than awaken the critical spirit in the reader himself, and one of the

first uses that he generally makes of it is to question the decisions of the writer who is trying to teach him. I ask leave to establish this distinction more at length, because it seems to me one of great importance in art-literature.

An *artist*, then, be he poet, painter, orator, musician, or writer of enchanting prose, is a person who, consciously or unconsciously, employs his mental gifts and labour in order to produce emotion by exciting interest and sympathy. He does this by using his own imagination to appeal to the imagination of another; as, for example, when the novelist invents a situation, or the historian realises past events as if he had actually witnessed them. The reader of the novel or history then follows the imagination of the artist by a slighter and easier effort of his own, and his pleasure consists precisely in this arousing of his own imaginative faculty which gives him new emotions under a new stimulus. The distinguishing peculiarity of the artistic nature is that it does not hesitate to produce emotion by saying what is not true. I will give a single instance, just at present, by way of illustration.

Leslie, in his autobiography, says that when he and his daughters were at Brighton, Mr. Rogers took them in his carriage to the Dyke.

'As we sat in his carriage looking over the vast expanse of country below us, he pointed down to a village that seemed all peace and beauty in the tranquil sunset.

'"Do you see," he said, "those three large tombstones close to the tower of the church? My father, my mother, and my grandfather are buried there."'

Leslie told me the anecdote himself, and imitated Rogers' tone of voice, which was most pathetic.

Now the truth was that Rogers had not a single relative in that churchyard, and the only foundation for what he said, as he soon afterwards confessed, was that he would have liked to be buried there himself.

Somebody, on hearing the story, exclaimed, 'What a lying old rascal!' Rogers was not precisely that. Without being a great poet he had much artistic feeling, and for a moment he heightened the interest of the peaceful churchyard by going beyond the truth, by leaving the truth behind as insufficient for the degree of sympathy and interest which he desired to produce in his hearers.

The critical spirit, on the contrary, so far from sacrificing truth to feeling, is constantly sacrificing feeling to truth. It does not precisely oppose itself to ideals or deny the value of fiction, but it will have no confounding of ideals with realities, of fiction with fact. Even at the risk of disenchanting you it will plainly tell you where the truth ends and the fiction begins; in history it accurately distinguishes between legend and the ascertainable, in science between what can and what cannot be experimentally verified, and in the fine arts the truly critical spirit takes upon itself the important but little appreciated office of showing what is due to the study of nature, and what has its origin in the embellishments or the errors of individual taste, ignorance, or imagination. Now as the production of sympathy and interest is the purpose of art, and the announcement of plain truth the purpose of criticism, it follows that the artist in words, the poet, the rhetorician, needs the utmost attainable

degree of literary craft and skill, whereas the critic needs only precision in the use of language, simplicity, and clearness. Pages adorned with the most moving eloquence, the most extensive and various learning, the most exquisite art in the arrangement of words, with a delicate sense alike of their signification and their sound, may still be utterly worthless as criticism from the simple omission of some fact or consideration which a réal critic would never have overlooked. And, on the other hand, a wise judgment, the latest result of a life spent in honest thought and laborious investigation, may be delivered in a short sentence of the simplest, the baldest English, of no more artistic value, as language, than the phrases used in the most ordinary conversation. Nay, it may even be less literary than that; it may be expressed in ungrammatical language or in professional slang, and still be excellent criticism of the very highest value.*

Now the critical faculty in Mr. Ruskin may have been naturally strong, but as the artist in him was incomparably stronger, the critical faculty, or the judgment, has been perpetually snubbed, silenced, and set aside by the artist's need of effect. 'English literature,' wrote a sober-minded foreign critic in 1861,† is like a beautiful woman who tries to hide the traces of age beneath the artifices of the toilet. Writers have but one object, to stimulate a dulled and deadened sense. Style and composition, everything betrays the necessity for striking

* Such phrases of critical advice as the following may be of inestimable value when rightly applied, 'Don't let your drawing be too tight;' 'Don't be mappy;' 'Mind that your work carries across the room.'

† Edmond Scherer, in the *Temps*.

effects. The reader's mind is to be kept in a state of incessant expectation and surprise. The study of effect leads to pretension, and pretension to charlatanism. Eccentricity has become a means of attracting book-buyers. There is calculated artifice in the antitheses, so knowingly balanced, of Macaulay; we find it in the artistic paradoxes of Ruskin, and in the jargon of Carlyle.'

This is severe, and I should not have used so harsh a term as charlatanism in speaking of these three eminent writers; but it is simply true that their works are the works of powerful literary artists who like to stimulate and astonish the reader and compel him to give them his attention. Exactly the same may be said of the violent language used by Victor Hugo, and of the calculated brusqueness and crudity of Browning.*

If the reader is interested in seeing a great literary artist at work for the purpose of producing a very strong effect upon the public mind, let him follow me through the next page or two. He knows already—we all know—how kindly Turner was encouraged when a young man, how well and how early he was received in the Academy, and how he enjoyed the friendship and sympathy of intelligent men such as Lord Egremont, Mr. Rogers, and many others, at a time when he was in the full enjoyment of his powers. Now it suited Mr. Ruskin's artistic purpose—at the close of a lecture at Edinburgh, which was

* Or of Madame de Staël's perpetual seeking for effect. 'She was always,' said Byron, 'aiming to be brilliant—to produce a sensation, no matter how, when, or where. She wanted to make all her ideas, like figures in the modern French school of painting, prominent and showy—standing out of the canvas, each in a light of its own.'

to be very pathetic and awaken deep feeling in the hearts of his audience—to say, in order to prepare the people for the sad account of Turner's death, that he had incurred neglect until late in life. Even this mild assertion would have been untrue. The exact truth is, that Turner was not neglected during life, but that in his case, as in many other cases, the fame of the artist when living was less splendid than it has since become. But now observe how Mr. Ruskin 'forces the note.' He does not simply say that Turner was comparatively neglected; that would not be enough, the audience would feel no thrill. These are the words used:

'Imagine what it was for a man to live seventy years in this hard world, with the kindest heart and the noblest intellect of his time, *and never to meet with a single word or ray of sympathy until he felt himself sinking into his grave.* From the time he knew his true greatness *all the world was turned against him:* he held his own, but it could not be without roughness of bearing and hardening of the temper, if not of the heart. No one understood him, no one trusted him, and every one cried out against him. Imagine, any of you, the effect upon your own minds, if every voice that you heard from the human beings around you were raised, year after year, through all your lives, only in condemnation of your efforts and denial of your success.'

This passage is admirable as an appeal to the feelings. It is the work of a consummate artist in words, and so deeply pathetic, that if well delivered in the lecture-room it must have touched the hearts of men and moistened the eyes of women. I admit and admire its excellence,

but I say that whilst Mr. Ruskin was writing it and during the whole space of time between the writing and the delivery of the lecture, the critic in him must have been silenced or asleep.

Many years before Turner died was there not a great meeting at Somerset House, attended by Sir Robert Peel, Lord Hardinge, and many others? and did not all these gentlemen confer upon Turner the very exceptional and very substantial compliment of subscribing five thousand pounds to buy two pictures of his for the National Gallery? Did not Archdeacon Fisher, a good judge of landscape, with considerable social influence, declare, so early as the year 1813, that in his opinion the *Frost* by Turner was the best landscape in the Royal Academy Exhibition? Did not Lockhart, a very influential Scotchman, express his opinion publicly, a year or two later, that Turner was simply the greatest of all living landscape-painters? Was not Turner selected to illustrate the greatest contemporary poets? and did not Scott (who died in 1832) say that Turner was 'all the fashion;' so much the fashion indeed, that, by sheer weight of reputation, he was imposed on the great novelist against his will? Did not Constable write on the 14th of January, 1832: 'I remember most of Turner's early works; amongst them was one of singular intricacy and beauty; it was a canal with numerous boats, making thousands of beautiful shapes, and I think the most complete work of genius I ever saw'? We know how passionately Constable admired Claude, yet in the very next sentence he calls one of Claude's pictures 'grand and solemn, *but cold, dull, and heavy.*' Had Mr. Ruskin

listened to critical suggestions like these, he would have had either to suppress a capital passage (always most painful to an author), or else weaken it to such a degree that all its influence would have been lost. The greatest objection to Mr. Ruskin's system of teaching lies in this nutshell. The artist, in him, is so powerful as to act independently of the critical faculty, whether the critical faculty be in itself positively strong or feeble. Such a condition of mind is often highly favourable to the production of painting or poetry, the function of those arts being not to preach truth, but to produce emotion. In critical writing the case is altered. Here it is not emotional influence that is needed, but a judgment so masterful that it steadily restrains the pen, and a love of truth so watchful that it refuses the aids of exaggeration.

It is not my intention to enter into an examination of Mr. Ruskin's teaching generally. Such an inquiry would of itself occupy a volume, and it would lead us away from our present subject—the life and genius of Turner. But it is quite within my province to examine a few of Mr. Ruskin's statements about Turner himself, and about the arts which he practised, or which have been used for the dissemination of his works. I have begun with the statement that Turner never met with a single word or ray of sympathy until he felt himself sinking into his grave; that no one trusted him; that no one understood him. All this was intended to prepare Mr. Ruskin's hearers for a most touching and pathetic account of Turner's death.

'He received no consolation in his last years, nor in his death. Cut off in great part from all society—first by

labour, and at last by sickness– hunted to the grave by the malignities of small critics, and the jealousies of hopeless rivalry—he died in the house of a stranger—one companion of his life, and one only, staying with him to the last.' See with what admirable art the idea of desolation is here conveyed, and what a sad ending it is! how solitary! how bereft of human sympathy and kindness! He dies in the house of a stranger—one companion, and one only, stays with him to the last. He receives no consolation. It is a perfect picture; the scene is admirably described in a few pathetic words; the emotion intended to be excited very probably *was* excited. But is the picture true? No, the appeal to the feelings is founded upon a fiction. Turner was *not* abandoned by his friends—it was he who abandoned *them.* Many of the Royal Academicians were anxious about him, and, besides the members of his own profession, there were numbers of other people in London who would have been delighted to render him a service. In spite of his habitual incivility in not answering letters, he was constantly receiving invitations. He had a morbid fancy for hiding himself, and would not let anybody know where he really lived. It is true that he died in the house of a stranger, but he did so by the capricious exercise of his own free will. There can be no necessity for a man to die in the house of a stranger in the very city where he possesses an excellent mansion of his own, with money enough to live there in the most perfect comfort, and even luxury.

Mr. Ruskin's pathetic appeals to our commiseration on behalf of Turner have produced some effect on other

writers, and may ultimately create a fabulous legend, like the French legend about Napoleon's poverty at St. Helena. Mr. Thornbury says, 'he left the nation that neglected him £140,000.' If the nation neglected him, where did he get the money? In the very next sentence Mr. Thornbury says that he was not unaccustomed to the society of men of wealth and rank. Good evidence, again, that he was not neglected.

"The same tendency to excessive statement which we have noticed in Mr. Ruskin's description of Turner's melancholy isolation, will be found in his account of Turner's performance as an artist. The simple truth is wonderful enough, but the desire to produce a strong effect upon the reader's mind has generally carried the author of 'Modern Painters' far beyond its boundaries.

'J. M. W. Turner is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of view, the only perfect landscape-painter whom the world has ever seen.'

An entire transcript of the whole system of nature! The system of nature is infinite; man's time and strength in this world are finite. It is not possible for finite man to transcribe infinite nature entirely. The great army of all the artists who have ever lived have still left plenty of fresh material in nature for their successors. But it is quite unnecessary for me to answer the author of 'Modern Painters,' since the author of 'Notes on some of the Principal Pictures exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy' answered him so effectually in the year 1858.

'Nobody has ever painted heather yet, nor a rock spotted richly with mosses; nor gentians, nor Alpine roses, nor white oxalis in the woods, nor anemone nemorosa, nor even so much as the first springing leaves of any tree in their pale, dispersed, delicate sharpness of shape. *Everything has to be done yet.*'

I may be told that this referred specially to the pre-Raphaelite method; that what the writer intended to say was, that no artist had painted these things with the minute skill and attention of the Pre-Raphaelites, and that the sentence bore no reference to Turner's transcript of nature, which was altogether different. Such an objection falls to the ground at once before Mr. Ruskin's declaration that Turner was himself a Pre-Raphaelite.

But this is not all. It is evident from some preceding lines of the same note, that in the year 1858 Mr. Ruskin considered even Turner's transcript of natural effects as insufficient, since he was looking forward to a more satisfactory rendering of the transcience of nature by hands trained in thorough Pre-Raphaelite study. After speaking of familiar and homely foreground subjects, he continued as follows:

'But what shall we say when the power of painting, which makes even these so interesting, begins to exert itself, with the aid of imagination and memory, on the splendid transcience of nature, and her noblest continuance; when we have the courses of heaven's golden clouds instead of squares of blue through cottage casements; and the fair river mists, and mountain shrouds of vapour instead of cottage smoke;—pine forests as well as banks of grass, and fallen precipices instead of heaps of flints. *All this is yet to come; nay, even the best*

of the quiet, accessible, simple gifts of nature are yet to come.'

We will recur, a little later, to the dogma that Turner was a Pre-Raphaelite; for the present it is enough to note that although a Pre-Raphaelite, and the very head of Pre-Raphaelitism, he had left so much both of foreground detail and distant effect entirely unrecorded.

Whatever Turner may have left undone, the author of 'Modern Painters' expressed unbounded faith in all that Turner actually did.

'In all that he says, we believe; in all that he does, we trust. It is therefore that we pray him to utter nothing lightly, to do nothing regardlessly. He stands upon an eminence from which he looks back over the universe of God and forward over the generations of men. Let every work of his hand be a history of the one, and a lesson to the other. Let each exertion of his mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy; adoration to the Deity, revelation to mankind.'

This is simply the artistic exaggeration of a teacher who, to make others believe, professes a much more fervent faith than that which is fundamentally his own. Even when Mr. Ruskin wrote the first volume of 'Modern Painters,' in the ardour of early manhood, he was not, in other moods, an absolute believer in Turner's infallibility. We know this by the following plain-spoken criticism of some of Turner's most important works.

'The *Caligula's Bridge*, *Temple of Jupiter*, *Departure of Regulus*, *Ancient Italy*, *Cicero's Villa*, and such others, come they from whose hand they may, I class

under the general head of "nonsense pictures." *There never can be any wholesome feeling developed in these preposterous accumulations*, and where the artist's feeling fails, his art follows ; so that the worst possible examples of Turner's colour are found in pictures of this class. Neither in his actual views of Italy has Turner ever caught her true spirit, except in the little vignettes to Rogers' poem. The *Villa of Galileo*, the nameless composition with stone-pines, the several villa moonlights, and the convent compositions in the *Voyage of Columbus*, are altogether exquisite ; but this is owing chiefly to their simplicity, and perhaps, in some measure, to their smallness of size. None of his large pictures at all equal them ; the *Bay of Baiæ is encumbered with material, it contains ten times as much as is necessary to a good picture, and yet is so crude in colour as to look unfinished.* The *Palestrina* is *full of raw white*, and has a look of Hampton Court about its long avenue ; the *Modern Italy* is purely English in its near foliage ; it is composed from Tivoli material, enriched and arranged most dexterously, *but it has not the virtue of the real thing.*'

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the rank assigned by Mr. Ruskin to Turner was that of the greatest painter of all time.

'We have had, living with us, and painting for us, the greatest painter of *all* time ; a man with whose supremacy of power no intellect of past ages can be put in comparison for a moment.'

The reader will observe that Turner's supremacy is not restricted to landscape, his own department of art. He is not the greatest landscape-painter, but the greatest painter.

Was he indeed really the Prince of painters, or is this only an artistic exaggeration intended to awaken the reader to a sense of the simple truth by asking him to believe much more? Is not this an artifice of rhetoric which answers to the common commercial and diplomatic artifice of asking more than one intends to take?

It is now time to discuss briefly Mr. Ruskin's affirmation that Turner was the true head of Pre-Raphaelitism.

The difficulty in arguing about this lies in the prudent care with which the leaders of the Pre-Raphaelites always avoided any definition of their doctrines. They very properly confined themselves to their own business of painting, and left the talking to their friends and enemies in the press. Pictures, however, speak in their own way, and the real Pre-Raphaelite pictures, those painted when the sect was still a power and attracting public attention, were as different from Turner's work as it is possible for one kind of art to be from its opposite. It may be worth while to note the principal points of difference, because they will help us to understand still more clearly the peculiarities of Turner's system.

The Pre-Raphaelite pictures were full of details painfully studied from nature, on the principle, apparently, of the most minutely accurate portraiture. Mr. Ruskin himself confirmed this by saying that the one principle of Pre-Raphaelitism was absolute, uncompromising truth, 'obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only.' He said that every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background was painted to the last touch in the open air from the

thing itself, and that every minute accessory was painted in the same manner.

We may assume, then, that accurate portraiture of objects was a leading Pre-Raphaelite principle. But Turner's principle was to avoid accurate portraiture. I might insist upon the difference of practice between artists who always worked from nature and a painter who never took a picture into the open air, but that is not the essential point. A man might paint from memory, if his memory were excellent, so as to make his work look as if it had been done from nature. He might report nature as Woodfall reported the debates in the House of Commons before shorthand writers took them down on the spot. Turner did nothing of the kind. His paintings are not reports, but works of fiction. He would not even condescend to make an accurate portrait of so large an object as a Highland mountain, nor of so interesting an object as a feudal castle; still less would he devote attention to truth of portraiture in matters of minor detail. The popular impression is not always right, but it was right in feeling the vastness of the difference between Turnerian and Pre-Raphaelite work. There is nothing *naïf* in Turner's work; it is consummately artificial, full of all the craft and subtlety of the ripest art, in which truth is constantly sacrificed to beauty and detail to general effect. The Pre-Raphaelites rejected the subtlety and cunning of the artist's craft to go back to the truth of nature. How far they succeeded in this enterprise we have not to consider, but we may close the subject by remarking that there *is* a Pre-Raphaelite landscape in the National Gallery, the *Jerusalem* of

Thomas Seddon. Future generations may conveniently compare that with Turner's work, and see the difference. The Pre-Raphaelite landscape is all clear, measurable, ascertainable fact; it is full of the most resolute object study, every object a distinct and separate motive for the artist's effort. He paints tree by tree, hillock by hillock, house by house, and in the foreground sheep by sheep and goat by goat. He paints the man in the corner exactly as he would have painted him if there had been no landscape, and the landscape as if there had been no figure. You may remove an object from any part of the work, and the loss will not be felt; the bits of study are as independent of each other as the short paragraphs of general intelligence in a newspaper. It is, in short, a kind of map, drawn and coloured with the most painstaking accuracy, and, no doubt, quite closely resembling the unlovely but interesting reality. Precious work of its kind, and work which we may be thankful for, but divided from that of Turner by a gulf as impassable as the abyss between the earth and the sun. The Pre-Raphaelite landscape is full of truthful object portraiture; hundreds of different objects are portrayed side by side as accurately as the artist could achieve it by the closest observation on the spot; in the Turnerian landscapes you cannot find a single accurate portrait of any hill, or tree, or building under heaven. In Seddon's work there is no composition; in Turner's all the material is arranged in clusters and groups, which again in their urn are grouped together into a pictorial whole. The Pre-Raphaelite works entirely from observation, Turner always from more or less successful invention. Seddon

does nothing but analyse, Turner synthetises always, in the smallest of his vignettes as in the largest pictures in his gallery.

It would have been pleasant and satisfactory, had it been possible, to place art criticism on so positive and secure a foundation as that of truth, for the truth of nature is really, in most things, ascertainable by the kind of labour which Mr. Ruskin so courageously bestowed on mountains and vegetation. We should then have had a criterion, and there would have been some possibility that the fame of dead artists, and the incomes of living ones, might have been less precarious, whilst criticism itself might have attained the respectable position of a science. The hope of such a generally satisfactory state of things as this was entertained for a time by many intelligent Englishmen, but it had no foundation in the essential nature of art.

'We must have the courage to declare,' says J. Milsand, with a just sense of what art is and is not, 'we must have the courage to declare, even at the risk of being misunderstood, that truth in the ordinary sense of the word will never be the aim of art, that the value which a picture may happen to possess as a means of making us understand the nature of realities, will never have anything in common with its value as a work of art. Let us be on our guard against the notion that truth is the pictorial element of painting; it is, on the contrary, the side by which pictures address themselves to the ordinary intelligence, to all the general faculties which the artist possesses in common with other men, but which are not his own soul as an artist, not that part of human nature which he undertakes to express

when he takes up his palette. If he teaches us to see better because he himself sees better than we do, we shall, no doubt, be the gainers, so long as he renders us this service without neglecting his special task; and it is a sort of negative duty for him not to shock our intelligence by remaining below the familiar conception of nature which may be prevalent in his time amongst the public. But as for estimating his merit as an artist according to his instructiveness, as for requiring him to rectify and complete our conceptions, nothing could be more false or dangerous than such a requirement. And this for two principal reasons: the first is, that if his productions are lessons of observation, the effort they require in order to be understood will no longer allow the spectator to be moved; the second, which is still more serious, is, that the painter himself, if governed by a didactic intention, will no longer be inspired by his own emotions.'

All this is excellent, especially the concluding sentences, which account fully and sufficiently for the undeniable fact that all scientific illustrations, however admirably executed, however rich in truth, invariably fail to produce in us the pleasure excited by works of art, and also that the nearer a picture approaches to the character of a scientific illustration the less our artistic sense is gratified by it. The disappointment of many young artists of the present generation, who have thrown all their effort into the acquirement and expression of mere knowledge, with the smallest possible effect upon the public mind, might have been prevented if the nature of art, as distinct from science, had been rather better understood. They were truthful and sincere when truth was not always wanted,

and even sincerity might be out of place. 'What!' the reader may ask in surprise, 'can good art ever be insincere?' Yes, in a certain sense, it undoubtedly can. The artist may set aside or dissemble his personal convictions out of consideration for the charm or power with which he thinks it necessary to endow his work of art. Shall I give an instance? Byron was a great artist, and now see the contrast between his private opinion as a man, and his published work as an artist. Here it is, in his own words.

'I have always had a great contempt for women; and formed this opinion of them not hastily, but from my own fatal experience. My writings, indeed, tend to exalt the sex; and my imagination has always delighted in giving them a *beau idéal* likeness, but I only drew them as a painter or statuary would do—as they should be.'

This is plain and clear. In this case the artist frankly admits that he was not faithful to his own experience. Raphael admitted as much when he said that he represented human figures not as they are but as they ought to be, and he admitted it still more frankly by the contrast between his drawings from nature (plain evidence that he knew what nature was) and the same figures, idealised, in his compositions.

At the close of Mr. Ruskin's preface to the second edition of his first volume, he says: 'My opponents yield me the field at once. One (the writer for the *Athenæum*) has no other resource than the assertion "that he disapproves the natural style in painting. If people want to

see Nature let them go and look at herself. Why should they see her at second-hand on a piece of canvas?" The other (*Blackwood*), still more utterly discomfited, is reduced to a still more remarkable line of defence. "It is not," he says, "what things in all respects really are, but how they are convertible by the mind into what they are *not*, that we have to consider."' Mr. Ruskin thought these remarks absurd, and yet the writers in the *Athenæum* and *Blackwood* had grasped two of the greatest principles of sound æsthetics. There is an excellent little poem by Jules Breton, the eminent French rustic painter, which illustrates what the *Athenæum* said. In this little poem a landscape-painter is at work upon an oak; a peasant comes to see what he is doing, and laughs at him for being at so much pains to make a sham oak-tree in paint, when anybody can easily get to see a real one. The writer concludes with the lesson that with reference to the art which merely copies nature the peasant was perfectly right. If painting were simply true, and no more, there would be no reason for painting what can be easily seen in nature, and yet how many of the very best pictures have been made from commonplace materials! Blackwood's line of defence is simply the true description of the mental operation which produces art, and which really and unquestionably *does* convert things into what they are not. I may be excused for introducing a little anecdote as an illustration of what the writer in *Blackwood* so judiciously observed. I happened to be with a well-known picture-dealer when he gave some friendly advice to a young artist whose works were full of the most

painstaking fidelity, yet had not the slightest artistic charm. 'You paint things as they are,' he said; 'and that is a great mistake. All successful artists paint things as they are *not*.' The remark struck me by its boldness, by the speaker's complete emancipation from the common delusion about truth, and all subsequent experience has convinced me that he was right.

The reader may now reasonably feel disposed to ask me a question of this kind: 'If you reject truth as the test and criterion of art, what other criterion have you?' The answer, the candid answer, is that there is no positive criterion for the really artistic element in a work of art. Almost everything in a picture may be tested except its artistic quality, but this subtly eludes all measuring and analysis. You can test truth of various kinds by the help of the sciences, but a picture may have been executed in the strictest conformity to science and still be perfectly worthless as fine art; and when we come to that artistic element itself which excuses so many errors, and without which all the knowledge in the world is vain, we can only feel its presence for ourselves, we cannot prove it to another. What we really can do is to tell others how the artistic power has affected ourselves, and this is the last and best result of art criticism. It is this which is valuable in Mr. Ruskin's writings about Turner, even in the utmost excesses of his statements. After all deductions, the wonderful fact remains that Turner, during his lifetime, found one admirer, a man of genius, a man of wide culture and very exceptional industry, who seriously believed that his intellect was

unequalled, and that he was the greatest painter of all time.

After this, any more moderate estimate must of necessity appear lukewarm and spiritless, but, notwithstanding this unfortunate effect of contrast, we will try to render a candid account of Turner's position in art.

The first question about any painter—not the highest or most important question, but the first in order—concerns his technical excellence. Was Turner an excellent painter, technically? This has been already answered at various times in the present biography. He was excellent in some points, but unequal and unsafe. It is very difficult to classify him justly, he lies so much outside of the good sound work of the great masters. It is probable that he was himself aware of this, as when he said of Vandevelde: 'I can't paint like him;' and the desire to execute works in the manner of his celebrated predecessors, which remained with him until his originality had fully developed itself, implies an uneasy preoccupation about his technical powers, and a wish to ascertain, by experiment, if they were equal to the ambitious task before him. There is a certain satisfaction in seeing work thoroughly well done which the reader must have felt for himself in the presence of the soundest and best work of the old masters, and which Turner's work in oil does not afford.* It seems as if, after having tried to

* Just as I am finally arranging these sheets for the press a letter reaches me from a very experienced picture-dealer, who writes in the most absolute sincerity, and this is what he says of Turner:

'I may be wrong, but I must confess to an increasing love for Corot and Constable. Turner is losing his hold upon me. When I group a few pictures, say Matthew Maris, Troyon, Diaz, Millet, Rousseau, James Maris, and Turner, the Turner has the worst of it. That is to say, the

paint soundly in early life, he had given up the pursuit of technical soundness in despair and determined to use painting simply as a means of expression for his imaginative powers, leaving its technical quality to chance. 'In our time,' said Fromentin, 'either men paint carefully and not always very well, or else they take no further trouble about it and hardly paint at all. The work is heavy and summary, lively and *négligé*, sensitive and rapidly got over, or else it is conscientious, explaining itself everywhere, according to the laws of imitation, and nobody, not even those who practise it, would venture to affirm that such painting is any the better for being scrupulous.' If you give this admirably candid paragraph the attention it deserves, it will enable you to understand the spirit of Turner's technical practice. He was one of those moderns who 'take no further trouble about it;' his work was 'sensitive and rapidly got over,' certainly not 'conscientious, explaining itself everywhere according to the laws of imitation.' He painted simply to express himself, heedless of the quality of the expression, just as Scott wrote his novels without stopping to study '*l'art de bien dire.*' The whole condition of his mind, as to technical matters, appears to have been a condition of despairing indifference. He used any new colour that the experimentalising ingenuity of modern chemistry could invent for the temptation of an artist. He used

Turner is crude, violent, and as a bit of work amateurish in comparison with the others. There can be no doubt as to Turner's genius, but his painting is poor in comparison with the great modern masters.'

The reader will observe how exclusively the objection to Turner, in this quotation, applies to technical power, of which I may observe that picture-dealers, from their constant habit of comparing, are often excellent judges.

body-colour and oil in the same works, and when pictures were sent by him from Rome in 1829, he said: 'If any wet gets to them they will be destroyed.' But it is not simply for its want of durability that his painting is unsound. It has not the firmness and substance of thorough work; it does not offer to the eye of the spectator that satisfaction which the textures and surfaces of the greatest masters invariably give. Look at a De Hooge, say the *Court of a Dutch House*, a picture with a good constitution, sound all through, yet painted two hundred years ago. See how brilliant it is; see how the colours are laid in their places, and how dense and strong is the substance of the paint, yet how light at the same time, and representative of nature! I am not going to compare Hobbema's simple talent of observation with Turner's imaginative genius, but pray look at Hobbema's *Avenue of Middleharnis* or his *Forest Scene* in the National Gallery, and acknowledge the sound quality of the work, quiet enough in colour; not brilliant like the De Hooge, but as firm in substance. Considered simply as painting, the work of these old Dutchmen is to that of Turner what parchment is to paper. If from Holland you cross over to Italy, and accustom your eyes for an hour to the quiet splendour of Titian—his rich surfaces, his blended colours, laid on a substantial groundwork of safe dead-colour—and then pass to Turner, you will find a difference like that between tapestry and cotton-print.

In water-colour the case presents a very different aspect. Turner was unquestionably, in his best time, the greatest master of water-colour who had ever lived. He may have been excelled since then in some special

departments of the art, in some craft of execution, or in the knowledge of some particular thing in nature; but no one has ever deserved such generally high rank as Turner in the art of water-colour painting. His superiority even goes so far that the art, in his hands, is like another art, a fresh discovery of his own. The colour, in his most delicate work, hardly seems to be laid on the paper by any means known to us, but suggests the idea of a vaporous deposit; and besides the indescribable excellence of those parts of Turner's water-colours which do not look as if they were painted at all, there is excellence of another kind in those parts which exhibit dexterities of execution. Nor is the strange perfection of his painting in water-colour limited to landscape; his studies of still life—birds and their plumage, bits of interiors at Petworth, etc.—are evidence enough that, had he chosen to paint objects rather than effects, he might have been as wonderful an object-painter as William Hunt was, though in a different and more elevated manner.

Though Turner was a reckless experimentalist, he was a very brilliant experimentalist, full of ideas and perpetually trying to realise his ideas. In fecundity of conception the old Dutchmen and Venetians are not to be compared with him for an instant. The regular old-fashioned system of painting, the system which enabled the old masters to reach such great technical excellence, was first to learn to paint from a clever man, and then to apply the art to five or six subjects, to be repeated in different forms till the artist died of old age. If Turner had done this, if he had restricted himself to a narrow speciality and paid careful attention to technical matters,

and had a good technical training at the beginning, his work might have been as good as that of any old master, but criticism has little concern with what might have been. As it is, criticism can only say that his experiments were always interesting, and often in the highest degree astonishing and wonderful, but seldom quite satisfactory, except in parts.

I have mentioned, as a reason for this deficiency, which it is useless to try to blink, the wide range of Turner's experiments; but there is another reason for it. He was always trying to paint the unpaintable, which the Dutch and the Venetians most prudently and carefully avoided. This tendency was skilfully hit by *Punch* with the exaggeration which properly belongs to satire, in the following imaginary title for a Turnerian picture:

'34. A Typhoon bursting in a Simoom over the Whirlpool of Maelstrom, Norway; with a ship on fire, an eclipse, and the effect of a lunar rainbow.

'"O Art, how vast thy mighty wonders are
To those who roam upon the extraordinary deep!
Maelstrom, thy hand is here."
From an Unpublished Poem.'

Do not let us be so narrow-minded as to forbid an artist to paint the unpaintable if he likes, but let us remember that when he does so the result must inevitably be a mere sign or substitute for the thing represented, a sort of pictorial algebra. De Hooge could paint a Dutchwoman standing in her backyard, close to her dust-bin, with a degree of pictorial efficiency incom-

parably superior to that of Turner when he painted the Angel standing in the Sun. Again, the habit of painting unpaintable splendours led Turner into a transcendental treatment of common realities, so that he came at last to paint the groups of figures in his foregrounds as if they had been sunset clouds.

There is one point, and one only, in which Turner really did excel the artists of all time, and that is in his appreciation of mystery in nature, and his superlatively exquisite rendering of it.

If Turner deserves honour for the originality which carried art further than it had ever before been carried in this direction, it is simple justice to add that Mr. Ruskin was the first writer on art who ever explained the value of mystery in painting. He touched upon this subject in the first volume of 'Modern Painters,' especially in the important paragraph which affirms that nature is never distinct and never vacant, and he recurred to it in two chapters on 'Turnerian Mystery' in the fourth volume.

Mystery in nature and art may be defined as that condition of things in which they are partially seen, sufficiently for us to be aware that something is there, but not sufficiently for us to determine all about it by sight alone, unaided by the inferences of experience. A bad painter would either explain too much, from mere knowledge, or else simplify to get rid of the difficulty; a painter who knew the value of mystery, and was able to render it, would show just enough of his objects to let the eye of the spectator lose them and find them again as it would in nature with the same uncertainty about what they are. He would render the confusion and

abundance of the signs by which the natural landscape expresses itself to the human eye, not giving more of things than nature gives, and trying, as far as possible, never to give very much less. I may add that it is perfectly possible (many readers will know this by experience) to have the strongest appreciation of the value of mystery, without being able to give it except under the penalty of feebleness, and it is probably for this reason that so many honest painters have made their work clearer and simpler than nature. Turner could paint strongly and mysteriously at the same time, which gave a great charm to his work for cultivated eyes, though it had the disadvantage of offending the vulgar by not being intelligible by them.

Mystery, in the art of painting, is most probably a modern object of study and technical ambition. We do not exactly know how Zeuxis and Apelles painted, but any cultivated critic who knows something of Greek sculpture and Greek literature, and of the inferior but still interesting classical paintings found at Pompeii, will feel perfectly satisfied that however admirable ancient Greek art may have been for its drawing, and perhaps even for colouring of a very simple and elementary kind, it cannot possibly have been mysterious. Clearness, the clear presentation of tangible objects, was the Greek conception of art, and you may look in vain through the ancient art of Egypt, Assyria, China, and Japan, for anything which indicates in the least that the artist regarded the mystery of nature in any other light than as a mere embarrassment to be got rid of by his own clarifying and simplifying conventionalism, as

muddy water is to be filtered to make it limpid, or as the branches of a pine-tree have to be cleared away before it can be brought to the straightness and smoothness of a mast. Follow the history of art downwards through ancient Rome, through mediæval Italy, Germany, and France, and see how long you have to wait before anything at all resembling the mystery of nature begins to find expression in graphic art of any kind whatever! Perugino is not mysterious, does not seem to have the least idea that such a quality can ever be desirable, his ideal is a perfectly clear sky with slender trees against it, painted leaf by leaf, and figures with perfect outlines. Van Eyck is clear and positive. Albert Durer has a strong sense of quantity in nature, but none whatever of mystery, and so it is with all the early German and Italian engravers. The profound and sombre genius of Rembrandt led him to study a certain kind of mystery, that of things half-seen in graduated obscurity, but he knew little or nothing of the mystery of light. Claude, in his turn, having a poetic sentiment, enjoyed the veiling of distances by atmosphere, but his conception was always simple, and though in a certain sense his distances may be said to be mysterious, his foregrounds are much less so; even in spite of his fine sense of richness and intricacy in foliage. Even the grand landscape design of Titian is too affirmative for the evanescence of nature. There is a light sketchiness in the landscape backgrounds of Rubens, and also in those of Watteau, which does duty for mystery, but is not to be compared for fulness of study and knowledge, to the purposeful mystery of Turner, all charged with observation and

meaning. It is then the simple truth, without any exaggeration or hyperbole, that Turner was the first artist who made mystery a special object of effort, and the first also to attain it in perfection. He was certainly conscious of this peculiarity in his art. When a picture of his went to New York to a Mr. Lenox, he asked Leslie how Mr. Lenox liked it.

'He thinks it indistinct.'

'You should tell him,' Turner replied, 'that indistinctness is my fault.'

He said this in a good-humoured way, but with a tone which clearly implied that he considered mystery an integral part of his art, and that whilst choosing to call it a fault, he did so only in condescension to the taste of the purchaser. Mr. Lenox, it may be well to add, soon altered his opinion as he gradually became able to read the mystery of Turner.

Though certainly not the inventor of Pre-Raphaelitism, and though educated by the influence of the old masters, Turner was a daring innovator in many things, sometimes fortunately, sometimes very much the reverse. An example of this in colour may be selected as one of those very rare artifices of colouring which are positive enough and simple enough to be discussed in art criticism. Mr. Ruskin says of Turner ('Modern Painters,' Part IX. Chapter XI.):

'His most distinctive innovation as a colourist was his discovery of the scarlet *shadow*. "True, there is a sunshine whose light is golden, and its shadow grey; but there is another sunshine and that the purest, whose light is white and its shadow scarlet." This was the

essentially offensive, inconceivable thing, which he could not be believed in.'

Now it is quite true that Turner in his later work did actually combine white lights with scarlet shadows, an invention which nobody had ever hit upon before, and therefore, perhaps, in that sense a discovery; but this invention was certainly not a discovery in nature, where the combination does not exist. Either it was a technical device of Turner's to get a false brilliance, or else he may have been gradually and unconsciously led to it by physical degeneration of the eye. You may watch and wait all your life long to see a natural object which is white in its lights under sunshine and scarlet in its shadows, and you will never see it in this world. It is like watching for the Holy Grail, 'rose-red with beatings in it as if alive.'

Mr. Ruskin places Turner amongst the seven supreme colourists of the world, the other six being, in his estimate, Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Tintoret, Corregio, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is always interesting to know what a critic thinks about the colouring of a painter, but it is not of the slightest use to argue the matter, as excellence in colour cannot possibly be proved by evidence. I should say that Turner's colour was often wonderful, often far below his best, and seldom natural. I should say, too, that he produced fine colour much less habitually than Giorgione, Titian, and Corregio, that he was often crude and violent, and occasionally hot, heavy, or dull. His unfaithfulness to nature would prove nothing against him as a colourist, but

rather imply a possibility in his favour. The colour of the great colourists is really nothing but a sort of visible music which has to be brilliant or harmonious, but which is always sufficiently like nature if it does not offend the spectator. Mr. Ruskin's declaration that colour requires especial veracity is simply one of those paradoxes which he throws up now and then like rockets to prevent his readers from falling into a state of inattention. 'Form,' he says, 'may be attained in perfectness by painters who, in their course of study, are continually altering or idealising it; but only the sternest fidelity will reach colouring. Idealise or alter in that, and you are lost. Whether you alter by abasing or exaggerating—by glare or by decline, one fate is for you—ruin. Violate truth wilfully in the slightest particular, or at least get into the habit of violating it, and all kinds of failure and error will surround you and hunt you to your fall.'

This is most effective writing, but as misleading as it is effective. The proof that the colour of the great colourists is not natural is that they are all so unlike each other. If they were all faithful copyists of nature, they would resemble one another exactly as photographs would if photography could render colour. I have said already that colour is visible music; it is so indeed, and since the colourists are musicians who compose for our eyes, they have the same liberty, the same individuality, as the musicians who write operas and oratorios.* 'Titian and Corregio,' says Véron, in his admirable

* It may possibly be due to this affinity between colour and music that all painters (Amaury Duval declares that there is no exception to this rule) love music with a sort of second love.

volume on 'Æsthetics,' 'Rubens and Rembrandt, are no more like each other than Beethoven is like Rossini, or Weber like Mozart, or Wagner like Verdi.' And again, in another place, he says with equal truth: 'There are very different ways of understanding colour. From Rubens to Giorgione, and from Velasquez to Veronese, there are varieties which prove the immense elasticity of the art of painting, and the astonishing liberty of action which genius can assume without changing its object.' There would be no such variety, no such liberty of action, if the colourists only rendered truth. What they really did was to discover, each of them, some pleasant chord or chords of colour of his own, to master these thoroughly by practice, and then go on applying them as long as they had strength to work. Turner's experiments in colour had more to do with art than with nature, and in many of his pictures, especially his later ones, a certain technical purpose manifests itself—the opposition between hot and cold tints in broad masses. A well-known landscape-painter told me that all his own colouring lay finally in the opposition between red and green, almost everything in his works being a passage from one to the other. In Turner the opposition is often between yellow and black, or between scarlet and cold grey. He is said to have declared that yellow was his favourite colour. The greatest technical merit of his colouring is his wonderfully brilliant performance in the upper notes. He carried up more colour into the regions of light than any other painter. An American critic says that 'Turner, being deficient in colour, lacked the first

element of a painter;" but the word 'deficient' seems inaccurate in this case. Turner was empirical, experimental, rash, adventurous to temerity, disposed to trust his own genius to any extent in wanderings from the beaten track; but he can hardly, even in his failures, be called deficient. His artistic nature, with all its errors, was one of the most opulent that ever existed.

I need hardly dwell upon his imaginative power, which is so evident to any one who can recognise imagination when he sees it that instances are superfluous. Every picture of Turner's, every drawing, almost every sketch, executed after he reached manhood, bears evidence of the action of imagination, which in his works would often amplify a simple theme, or heighten still further the sublimity of a sublime one. There have been few artists of any kind, there has not been one landscape-painter, in whom the action of the imaginative faculty has been so constant; and it is the more surprising in his case that his production was so enormous. This incessant action of the imaginative faculty made it impossible for Turner to draw the scenes of nature faithfully; but what his drawings lose in fidelity they generally more than regain in art.

A quality in Turner's art which has been much less spoken of than his imagination is his taste, which was of exquisite refinement. It was not infallible, there are compositions by him which seem sadly wanting in taste, compositions overburdened with uninteresting material or spoiled by awkward arrangement; but notwithstanding occasional failures it is certain, so far as anything about such a disputable subject can be, that Turner had a deli-

cate and singularly elegant perception of the becoming in the arrangement of his materials, that he gave almost every subject a certain charm, commonly attributed to what people used to call his 'magic pencil,' but in reality due to the fine choice in selection and rejection, watchfully exercised by a mind of extraordinary refinement. I have not space to give special instances, but I may say generally that (with very few exceptions) the little vignettes seem to me the best examples of taste in all that he did, each a bit of perfected beauty, natural and artificial at the same time.

> 'As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost Horticultural art.'

I should say, then, to sum up, that Turner was a landscape-painter of extraordinary yet by no means unlimited genius, a subtle and delicate but unfaithful draughtsman, a learned and refined but often fallacious chiaroscurist, a splendid and brilliant but rarely natural colourist, a man gifted with wonderful fertility of imagination and strength of memory (though this last is less easy to determine because he altered everything), a student of Nature whose range was vast indeed, for it included mountains, lakes, lowland rivers and the sea, besides all kinds of human works that can affect the appearance of a landscape (castles, abbeys, cities, villages, houses, bridges, roads, etc., etc.), yet not universal, for he never adequately illustrated the familiar forest trees, and had not the sentiment of the forest, neither had he the rustic sentiment in its perfection. I should say that Turner was distinguished greatly by his knowledge, but still

more distinguished by his exquisite taste, and by the singular charm which it gave to most of his works, though not to all of them; that he was technically a wonderful but imperfect and irregular painter in oil, unsafe and unsound in his processes, though at the same time both strong and delicate in handling; that he stands apart and alone in water-colour, which in his hands is like a new art; that he was an excellent line-etcher in preparation for mezzotint, and a good engraver in mezzotint besides; and that with all these gifts and acquirements he was a very great and illustrious artist, but not the greatest of artists. I believe that his fame will last; that he was as much a poet on canvas as Byron and Shelley were in written language, and that although it is possible that his performance may be afterwards excelled, it will be very difficult for any future landscape-painter to rival his reputation in his own country.

The qualities of Turner's art are so various and so great, that there is some danger, especially with the influence of Mr. Ruskin's eloquence and frequent use of hyperbole, of a national idolatry of Turner, like the Roman idolatry of Raphael, or the French idolatry of Claude. Such a result would be a great evil to landscape-painting in England, and to the æsthetic culture of Englishmen who are not practical artists. Even as it is, the fame of Turner is injurious to English landscape-painters of merit, who, if inferior to him in range of study or strength of imagination, are often in some respects his superiors, and able to render what they love best in nature with a degree of affectionate fidelity which he

certainly could not have equalled. With all my admiration for Turner I should be sorry to contribute to such a result as this. The fame of Claude, of Poussin, and Salvator, arrested the movement of landscape art in France for more than a hundred years, and the regular 'classical landscape' on those models (or supposed to be on those models) was until quite recently the only landscape recognised by the official teaching. Deliverance came at last through the modern rustic school and the sylvan influences of the forest of Fontainebleau. An uncritical adoration of Turner might narrow and falsify English landscape-painting if the natural vigour and independence of the English race did not continually re-assert itself. Let us enjoy what is delightful in his art, and admire what is admirable, but let us remember that he belongs already to the past, that he is a dead master, that he will soon be an old master, and that an art which would preserve its freshness must work on towards its own future.

We have lived in an interesting and exciting time in the history of landscape-painting, a time of discoveries which in the nature of things cannot occur again. Modern landscape was really begun by Claude in the direction of idealism, and by the Dutchmen in the direction of realism. Turner took up the idealism of Claude, imitated it, or followed it up to a certain point, and then diverged into an idealism of his own, which he applied to a much wider range of material. The Pre-Raphaelites tried the experiment of a new realism, not founded on Dutch work as to its technical principles, yet resembling Paul Potter in the close study of separate details. Constable set the example of a resolute naturalism, an ex-

ample which has had immense influence on modern art. I do not see how it can be henceforth possible for landscape-painting to go into any strikingly new direction, except so far as this, that there will always be a certain freshness and novelty in the work of new men of original genius on account of their personal preferences. Turner may be excelled in many ways by some genius in the future, more richly gifted and more thoroughly trained, for though his art was extensive it was not without limits, and though his skill was great it was not without imperfection; but however wonderful may be the work of the future genius, it is most improbable that he will ever win a fame like the fame of Turner. He will not have Turner's opportunities for doing what has not been done before. He will not have a writer of singular eloquence and unlimited devotion to be the priest and prophet of his divinity. He will live in an age of cooled enthusiasms and inherited critical knowledge, which will indispose the public for any eager partisanship in his favour. Even already the first ardour of modern interest in artistic questions has given place to a tranquil philosophy. There is nothing now in Europe like the warfare between the Classics and Romantics, which agitated all the *élite* of Parisian intelligence in 1830, or even like the much feebler excitement which attended the rise of Pre-Raphaelitism in England. There has been some slight commotion about the revival of etching, but that is merely the resuming of a process which had been abandoned. It is becoming more and more difficult to create a sensation in art, and without a sensation such a fame as that of Turner is not possible.

CHAPTER XVI.

Turner's character and habits.—Turner's manners.—Religion and morality.—Temperance and intemperance.—Turner's generosity.—Turner's will.—Works of art left to the nation.—Conclusion.

THIS ends what I have to say of Turner as an artist, but there are some points in his character as a man which cannot be left unnoticed.

He was one of the most eccentric Englishmen who ever lived, a perfect British original. Emerson says that Nature is at the greatest pains to protect originalities against hostile influences; and if so, Turner must have been the object of special precautions on her part. The narrowness of his literary education protected him, for foreign languages, whether ancient or modern, expose the mind to the influence of foreign ideas. It was even a protection to his originality not to be able to write better than he did, for he tried hard to write, long and vainly, and if he had succeeded he would have spent much of his energy in verse. It is easier for a painter to live in eccentric isolation than for a man of letters, whose art it is to use and elevate the common language of the world, and who needs even more than others the common culture, the common experience of mankind. In many respects the eccentricities of Turner had an excellent

effect upon his art. Nothing is more astonishing in Turner's life than his prodigious fertility, the enormous *quantity* of his work, the hundreds and hundreds of pictures that he left behind him, the thousands and thousands of drawings and sketches, the mountain of labour represented by the great sum total of his vast and various performance! Remember, too, that every touch of what bears his name is really and truly his own, that he did not keep a picture manufactory, as Rubens did, with a score of workmen and pupils toiling incessantly under his direction; that he did not despise detail, but finished all his work sufficiently and much of it minutely; that he wrought for colour as much as form, tenderly, delicately, and therefore (however swiftly) without hurry—and then, after taking all these things into consideration, ask yourself how it would have been possible for a man of the world to do with his own fingers such a heap of work as this! Merely to copy all Turner's works completely, without having any trouble about scheming and inventing them, would occupy a man for a hundred years. He who wrought them could not conform to the customs of 'good society.' He got up early in the morning as labourers and blacksmiths do, he worked at his trade all day, he wasted no time over his simple meals, he embarrassed himself with none of the cares and troubles of a great establishment, and left what Emerson derides as the 'cards, custards, and compliments' of society to those who value them and have nothing better to occupy their thoughts. He even carried his nonconformity to such lengths that it is wonderful how people tolerated him at all. He seldom answered dinner

invitations, but went or not, just as he felt inclined at the last moment. He invited nobody to dinner at his own house in Queen Anne Street, and though not quite so stingy as he has been represented, for he would pay a score liberally at an inn (on rare occasions, and partly because it amused him to astonish people) the rule of his life was to shut himself up when at home, and keep his movements secret when he went out. These eccentricities, which look so unsocial, were merely the habits of a workman who protected his own peace. He understood that part of prudence thoroughly. He saved money at first to win his artistic independence, the liberty to paint what he liked and on his own artistic principles; the habit of saving remained with him afterwards, but he never cared for money in comparison with his art, and he did not, in the real and true meaning of the expression, work for money after he became independent. Most of his eccentricities may be explained by two considerations: the first, that the practice of his art was the delight as well as the labour of his life; the second, that the art he practised is best pursued in solitude. He bolted the door of his painting-room and kept out critics and gossips, surely a wise decision, unless it can be proved that the critics and gossips would have aided him in his labour.* Even when sketching from nature with a friend, he would go apart for privacy and keep the result of his sitting to himself. It is bad enough to be misunderstood when your work is done, without being plagued by other

* This he carried to such an extent that he never admitted even his friend Mr Hawkes of Farnley into his studio, and yet he loved Mr. Hawkes far more than most men love their brothers.

people's want of apprehension whilst it is in progress. We have evidence that Turner was painfully sensitive to criticism, as many artists are, and that he was tortured by what the newspapers said of him. There was in his mind the apparent contradiction, which has frequently been observed in men of genius, between an eager desire for public reputation and an almost morbid passion for privacy of life. Whilst planning schemes for attaining the utmost possible notoriety, he lived in hiding like an insolvent debtor.

Although a hard-working man, almost entirely absorbed in the laborious practice of his profession, Turner was not a Philistine; I mean that he was not illiberally indifferent to other kinds of culture than his own; on the contrary, there is abundant evidence that he took an interest in literature and science, though his mind was so especially and peculiarly constituted for painting that his pursuit of literature was not practically successful, and his scientific studies hardly got beyond the initial stage of intelligent curiosity. Even the titles of his pictures are enough to prove some genuine interest in antiquity; we have already seen how much his mind was impressed by the story of ancient Carthage. An artist who takes a general interest in painting and architecture is sure to be led up to antiquity through art if not through literature, and Turner's acquaintance with ancient subjects was probably due at first to the suggestions of the old masters. He had at one time serious thoughts of giving himself classical literary culture, by the help of his friend Trimmer, and had the courage to attack both Latin and Greek, but, as might have been

anticipated, without success—an inevitable consequence of his strange natural incapacity for languages. His own poetry has been examined at some length in this biography, and frequently quoted. It gives evidence of a desire for literary activity, which was not accompanied by any natural literary gift; still, we ought to remember how much writers gain by culture, especially in verse, and we may recall Byron's assertion, that to make really excellent verses a man ought to have no other occupation. Turner, like most artists, possessed but few books, but it was his custom to have a volume or two with him when he travelled, and it has been ascertained that his travelling companions at one time were Young's 'Night Thoughts,' Izaak Walton, and a translation of Horace. I have mentioned M. Amaury Duval's theory, that all painters without exception have a second love for music, so the reader may be curious to know whether Turner loved music or was indifferent to it. He was at one time an amateur musician, and his instrument was the flute, but I do not know that he ever attained any respectable degree of skill. A gamut for a flute was found in one of his note-books, and the flute itself was found in his house after his death. I believe that we shall not be unjust to Turner in considering him a man of one pursuit, who would willingly have extended the range of his culture if he could have found the time, but who did not allow the studies in which he was an amateur to interfere with that one great field of study in which he was so pre-eminently the artist. He had not the facilities in various directions which are given by a good ordinary education in languages and science, that general

education which may not be very much in itself, yet is to its possessor like a bunch of keys, with which at any time he can open the doors of knowledge. Would Turner have been a greater artist with a better general education? The answer is very doubtful. Scholarship and exact science might possibly have weakened within him that visionary faculty which was the true fountain of his art. To see Nature, to dream of what he had seen and transform it as he dreamed, to realise the vision afterwards in colour, this was the occupation of his life; and though he did not despise other knowledge, he left it to its own students.

A written portrait of Turner cannot be complete without some account of his manners and his morals. He was a person of unprepossessing appearance, short and thick-set, with coarse features and the general appearance of the skipper of some small merchant craft living on shore in the interval between two voyages. He does not seem ever to have set up for being what is called a gentleman, but had the style and manner of the lower middle class. He had a great difficulty in expressing himself properly, which made him very reserved, and he was absolutely incapable of saying kind and polite things in an easy and graceful way, though not at all incapable of doing them. Mr. Ruskin tells a story of his practical kindness in combination with bad manners when out sketching with a friend, who 'got into great difficulty over a coloured sketch. Turner looked over him a little while, then said, *in a grumbling way*, "I haven't got any paper I like, let me try yours." Receiving a block-book, he disappeared for an hour and a half.

Returning, he threw the book down, *with a growl*, saying: "I can't make anything of your paper." There were three sketches on it, in three distinct stages of progress, showing the process of colouring from beginning to end, and clearing up every difficulty which his friend had got into.' This story exactly coincides with everything that we authentically know of Turner; he was at the same time kind in deed and rude in manner. There was no necessity, after borrowing the block-book, to throw it down with a growl; he might have handed it back to the lender with a word of thanks. It has sometimes seemed to me that many things in Turner's character are only exaggerations of English characteristics. The typical Englishman is shy, reserved, fond of privacy; Turner had these peculiarities in excess. The typical Englishman has plain manners; Turner's manners were plain to gruffness. The typical Englishman loves money and yet is generous at the same time; Turner was habitually avaricious, yet could be splendidly liberal when it suited him. It is a well-known peculiarity of the English character to shrink from the expression of noble sentiments, and from all language which by any possibility could be called high-flown; Turner had this kind of *mauvaise honte* to such a degree that he could not say the civil things which are usual even amongst Englishmen, and his conversation had not even that simple kind of elegance which English usages permit. The Englishman dresses plainly; Turner carried this to the extent of shabbiness. English workmen work harder and better than those of other nations; Turner was pre-eminent for his power of toil.

Mr. Ruskin has mentioned irritability as one of Turner's characteristics. Here is an instance which seems to prove it. 'On one occasion,' says Mr. Rose, 'I had the audacity to ask him if he painted his clouds from nature. One has heard of "calling up a look," The words had hardly passed my lips when I saw my *gaucherie*. I was afraid I had roused a thunderstorm; however, my lucky star predominated, for, after having eyed me for a few moments with a slight frown, he growled out, "How would you have me paint them?" then seizing upon his fishing-rod and turning upon his heel, he marched indignantly out of the house to the water's-edge.' There was no necessity for being angry; the question was not an insult, nor was it even foolish. Some artists (Constable, for example) have painted their studies of skies rapidly in oil; others have contented themselves with pencil memoranda from nature. Turner was always ready to resent either a question or a request as an unwarrantable liberty. 'Mrs. R—— had a pet spaniel which was one day lying in her lap; Turner was seated close by, reading; a sudden impulse induced her to ask him to make a drawing of her favourite. The R.A. opened his eyes with astonishment, at the same time replying, "My dear madam, you do not know what you ask."' Here is an account of a visit to Turner paid by Dr. Shaw, a relation of his on his mother's side.

'Of a sudden the great artist made his appearance. I bowed, not too obsequiously nor too low, putting a question to him immediately after the salutation as follows: "May I ask if you are the Mr. Turner who visited at Shelford Manor, in the county of Nottingham,

in your youth?" "I am," he answered, in a tone and manner full of dignity, evidently evincing feelings of an untoward nature. He was clearly paving the way for a magnificent outburst of passion—the thunderstorm was gathering. To appease him I became somewhat bland in manner. I tried to throw oil upon the troubled waters. Assuming a manner which perhaps might be denominated one of a more winning kind, I said: "May I take the liberty of asking you whether your mother's name was Marshall?" He replied, in a tone of voice accompanied with the look of a fury, clearly showing that the flash of lightning had appeared to warn me that the storm was about to break. After this I began to feel uneasy. I felt half inclined to say something monstrously uncivil to him for his bearish manners. I waited, however, for him to begin the attack, which soon followed. He drew himself suddenly into the most dignified attitude I ever beheld, even from a clever actor or an infuriated duke. His manner was full of majesty, accompanied with a diabolical look. He said: "I consider, sir, that you have taken a most unwarrantable liberty with me by the manner in which you have obtruded yourself upon me."'

This was the peculiar character of Turner's irritability —a disposition to resent anything resembling intrusion, and to consider every attempt to open communication with him as necessarily intrusive. The origin of this state of mind was probably nothing but an early practical wisdom, a keen sense of the value of time, and of the injury inflicted on an industrious man by the interruptions of idlers. We ought to remember that an artist is not, like a shopman, in the constant habit of talking to people in the way of business; his work

advances best in solitude, and every interruption is a definite injury to him unless it brings with it some acceptable compensation. In Turner the horror of interruption grew to a morbid excess, so that visitors found him irritated beforehand, and the slightest *maladresse* on their part was enough to kindle his impatience into anger.

Of Turner's religion I know really nothing, except that (like Milton) he did not generally go to church, though he went there with his friends when he visited them in the country. Mr. Ruskin, who knew him personally, speaks of his 'infidelity' and his 'faithlessness;' but I am quite unable to give the reader any authentic account of Turner's opinions in detail, and yet a biography of him cannot be complete without some reference to the subject. His extreme brevity in letter-writing, his reserve in conversation, and his general weakness in those intellectual faculties which express themselves in words, made him a most unlikely person to utter his mind at all copiously on theological subjects, and we must remember that in his day heterodox opinions were less freely circulated than they are now. All we know is that Turner did not profess to be a member of any visible church. Mr. Thornbury, in his biography, said something to the effect that he was oppressed in his latter years by the despairing fear of annihilation; but I do not know that Mr. Thornbury had any authority for this beyond an induction which may have been erroneous. There are unbelievers (like Theodore Parker) who have the most perfect confidence in a future life, and others who (like Stuart Mill) have not that confi-

dence absolutely, yet meet their end without despairing fear. Turner may have belonged to one of these categories, though it is not probable that his opinions had any profoundly philosophical character. It is more likely that he simply found difficulties in believing, and stayed away from church without going very deeply into theological or philosophical questions of any kind. From what we know of Turner's intellect, it appears to have been entirely incapable of any sustained critical investigation.

I find it difficult to speak of Turner's morality with perfect justice to his memory, not because we have no facts to argue upon, but because he has been unlucky in the publicity given to them, and in a certain inelegance which makes his errors appear more coarse and gross than those of the old Italian masters. We all know the pictures of Titian and his mistress, and his portraits of her, yet nobody talks of the immorality of Titian; but Turner's domestic arrangements with Mrs. Danby and Mrs. Booth give more acute pain to our sense of propriety because they seem more degrading. We all make distinctions of this kind, and we cannot help it. Lord Byron's *liaison* with the elegant and accomplished young Countess Guiccioli shocks us less than his intimacy with the vulgar Venetian woman who preceded her. In Turner's conduct in this respect there were two offences, one against morality and the other against good taste. I am not going to defend or excuse either of these offences, but in justice to Turner I wish them to be clearly separated. Again, I think it is only fair to point out that Turner has been singularly unfortunate in the

evil reputation which has attached itself, in quite a peculiar and especial manner, to his conduct in this respect. I do not know why — except that he was a man of genius and therefore exposed to the envy and malice of his inferiors—Turner should be singled out for especial opprobrium in such a city as London, which is not visibly any more moral since he has been laid in his grave. Unless people are resolutely determined to shut their eyes to what passes continually before their faces, they must be well aware that Turner's conduct, though blamable, was not very unusual. It is said that he left behind him four illegitimate children, but there is no evidence that he ever seduced an innocent girl or disturbed the peace of a household.

Turner's way of living was habitually simple and temperate, but he drank occasionally more than his usual quantity, and towards the close of his life he is said tc have stimulated sluggish or failing powers with frequent glasses of sherry. It is not fair to represent him as a drunken sensualist for this. Thousands of overworked professional men have done as much, to the detriment, no doubt, of their health, and perhaps even in the long-run to the disadvantage of their work as well; but in such cases let us be charitable, and admit that the habit does not originate in sensuality. When the powers of production fail, the producer too often tries to recover them for the hour that he toils at his task even at the cost of some after depression. Turner's occasional excesses when in perfect health may be explained by the habits of his age. In the days of George the Fourth many Englishmen got tipsy from time to time, and no-

body thought the worse of them, and when they did not get tipsy they drank abundantly still. Mr. Cyrus Redding, who travelled with Turner in Devonshire, said 'he was much attached to vulgar porter, and discarded wine, at least with dinner, although afterwards he would take his glass freely, as was much more the custom in those days than at present.' This, I believe, is a fair and honest way of stating the matter. Few Europeans in those days were water-drinkers. Even the moderate ones, men such as Scott and Goethe, drank in their quiet way enough to astonish a modern teetotaller.* That Turner was never excessively addicted to sensual gratification of any kind is sufficiently proved by the enormous amount of delicate work that he accomplished, and by the singularly fine condition of his nervous system. I may remind the reader that Turner painted habitually without a mahlstick, which proves wonderful sureness of hand; that his work on a small scale is more delicate than that of any other landscape-painter; and that he could bear a volley from a battery of artillery close to him, and quite unexpected, without betraying the very slightest disturbance. He was equal to any kind of travel, walked his twenty miles and more with perfect ease, and was superior to sea-sickness.† This does not indicate habitual

* 'Lest this statement should convey a false impression I hasten to recall to the reader's recollection the habits of our fathers in respect of drinking. It was no unusual thing to be a 'three-bottle man' in those days in England, when the three bottles were of port or Burgundy; and Goethe, a Rhinelander, accustomed from boyhood to wine, drank a wine which his English contemporaries would have called water. The amount he drank never did more than exhilarate him; never made him unfit for work or for society.'—*Lewes' Life of Goethe.*

† 'The sea had that dirty puddled appearance which often precedes a hard gale. We kept towards Rame Head to obtain an offing, and when

intemperance. We get a glimpse of him on the Margate boat in the biography by Mr. Alaric Watts, which exhibits temperance and economy at the same time:

'Mr. Turner was very fond of Margate, and in the summer often went there on Saturday morning by the *Magnet* or *King William* steamer. Most of the time he hung over the stern, watching the effects of the sun and the boiling of the foam. About two o'clock he would open his wallet of cold meat in the cabin, and, nearing himself to one with whom he was in the habit of chatting, would beg a clean plate and a hot potato, and did not refuse one glass of wine, but would never accept two. It need hardly be added that he was no favourite with the waiters.'

The same economical disposition, combined with temperance, may be detected in an item which frequently occurred in his accounts of his travelling expenses under the title 'Boxing Harry,' a piece of slang which Turner probably picked up from the commercial travellers, and

running out from the land the sea rose higher, until off Stokes Point it became stormy. We mounted the ridges bravely; the sea in that part of the Channel rolls in grand furrows from the Atlantic, and we had run about a dozen miles. The artist enjoyed the scene. He sat in the stern-sheets intently watching the sea, and not at all affected by the motion. Two of our number were sick. The soldier, in a delicate coat of scarlet, white, and gold, looked dismal enough, drenched with the spray, and so ill that at last he wanted to jump overboard. We were obliged to lay him on the rusty iron ballast in the bottom of the boat, and keep him down with a spar laid across him. Demaria was silent in his suffering. In this way we made Bur Island; the difficulty was how to get through the surf, which looked unbroken. At last we got round under the lee of the island, and contrived to get on shore. All this time Turner was silent, watching the tumultuous scene.'—*Mr. Cyrus Redding's Autobiography.*

which means a meat tea, or the combination of dinner and tea in a single repast, certainly not one of the happiest inventions of economists.

The best point in Turner's character was his generosity, not in money matters only, but in the general condition of his feelings. It may seem strange that such a quality should have been compatible with what we know of Turner, with his grasping habit in money matters, for he clutched at shillings and sixpences, his gruff manners, and his constant anxiety about his own position in the world of art; all that can be said is that we have here one of those apparent anomalies in character which are not very rare, though they invariably astonish us when they occur. Victor Hugo once explained that the secret of the interest inspired by some of his best-known inventions was, that he purposely endowed repulsive or uninteresting characters with some splendid virtue which overcame the reader's dislike to them, and produced in his mind a glow of reaction in their favour. Turner was a character of this kind. Though unpolished, and even from the point of view of any severe social criticism positively uncivilised, though not (in the social sense) a gentleman, or anything resembling a gentleman, Turner had a nobility of heart as much above ordinary gentlemanhood as true poetry is above mere versification. All who knew him are agreed that he never was heard to speak in depreciation of any of his contemporaries, but there are several instances of his kindness in rendering them services, and in saying what could fairly and truly be said in their favour. This reticence is a rare virtue amongst artists, not only be-

cause they are often (and very naturally) jealous of each other, but because they often conscientiously disapprove of each other's work, believing it to be positively harmful to public taste. Mr. Trimmer once happened to be fishing with Turner, who took with him Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope.' There were illustrations in the book, and he showed one of them to his companion, saying, 'That is pretty.' Mr. Trimmer answered, 'Nothing first rate, is it?' Turner repeated his word of praise, 'It is *pretty*, and he is a poor man with a large family.' Observe how carefully Turner avoided saying anything, or even assenting to anything unfavourable to his less fortunate contemporary. Here is another anecdote of his generous recognition of an artist inferior to himself. 'There was a painter of the name of Bird, and when Bird first sent a picture to the Academy for exhibition, Turner was on the hanging committee. Bird's picture had great merit; but no place for it could be found. Turner pleaded hard for it. No, the thing was impossible. Turner sat down and looked at Bird's picture a long time; then insisted that a place must be found for it. He was still met by the assertion of impracticability. He said no more, but took down one of his own pictures, sent it out of the Academy, and hung Bird's in its place.'* Now, is not that a lovely little anecdote, a story to be told to the very angels in heaven? It is as sweet and acceptable to our moral sense as the fragrance of the lily of the valley to our nostrils in the spring. We know how attached Turner was to the Royal Academy, he

* I give the story in Mr. Ruskin's words. See 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting.' Lecture iii.

loved it as people love their families and their homes and Haydon's attack on the Academy so hurt Turner's feelings that he declared Haydon had stabbed his mother. 'He stabbed his mother, he stabbed his mother!'. Nevertheless, Turner could so control his own irritability that he did justice to the violent figure-painter, who frankly acknowledged it: 'But Turner behaved well, and did me justice.'

We may now pass to his actual generosity in money. He was very exacting in money matters, very close, and sometimes almost mean in his closeness, as when he would ask for small advantages when he received considerable sums. At the same time, where his affections or his sympathies were touched (and his nature was really rich in both), he could be nobly and effectually generous. The following true story, narrated by Mr. Ruskin, is probably but one example out of many:

'At the death of a poor drawing-master, Mr. Wells, whom Turner had long known, he was deeply affected, and lent money to the widow until a large sum had accumulated. She was both honest and grateful, and after a long period was happy enough to be able to return to her benefactor the whole sum she had received from him. She waited on him with it; but Turner kept his hands in his pocket. "Keep it," he said, "and send your children to school and to church." He said this in bitterness; he had himself been sent to neither.'

Mr. Thornbury, in his biography, informs us that Turner once returned to Mr. Charles Heath bills to the amount of £1000, because Mr. Heath's affairs were not

in a prosperous condition. Of course, had Turner been as selfish as most people, that would have been the strongest possible reason for getting the bills discounted at once. But this is a mere trifle to another deed of Turner's, also narrated by Mr. Thornbury, who affirmed that it was 'thoroughly proved.'

'An early patron of Turner, when he was a mere industrious barber's son working at three-shilling drawings in his murky bedroom, had seen some of them in a window in the Haymarket, and had bought them. From that time he had gone on buying and being kind to the rising artist, and Turner could not forget it. Years after he heard that his old benefactor had become involved, and that his steward had received directions to cut down some valued trees. Instantly Turner's generous impulses were roused; his usual parsimony (all directed to one great object) was cast behind him. He at once wrote to the steward, concealing his name, and sent him the full amount; many, many thousands—as much as £20,000, I believe. The gentleman never knew who was his benefactor; but in time his affairs rallied, and he was enabled to pay Turner the whole sum back. Years again rolled on, and now the son of Turner's benefactor became involved. Again the birds of the air brought the news to the guardian angel of the family; again he sent the necessary thousands anonymously; again the son stopped the leak, righted himself, and returned the whole sum with thanks.'

It is also affirmed that Turner used to say to one of his intimate friends: 'Don't wish for money; you will not be the happier; and you know you can have any money of me you want.'

He had tenants in Harley Street who had been in arrear for two years, but he would not allow his lawyer to distrain.

These scraps of anecdote are some evidence of the innate nobility and benevolence of the man; but since we know the secretiveness of his disposition we may reasonably infer that most of his acts of kindness remained unknown to all except the recipients.

One great project of his is known to us—his scheme for bettering the condition of the unfortunate in his own profession. Though successful in art himself, he had the keenest sense of its difficulty and precariousness; and whilst he never criticised an unsuccessful fellow-workman, he knew how many artists led lives of constant anxiety, deepening at last into final poverty and failure. Instead of scorning his humbler brethren for their incapacity to do what he had done, he occupied his solitary musings with the problem how to so order matters that his success might be made to operate as some alleviation of their misfortune. I have already sufficiently drawn attention to the one deduction which may be made from Turner's generosity; there can be no doubt that it was part of a great project for the perpetuation of his name and fame, the bequest to the National Gallery, and the Turner medal, being also part of the same project. But although this desire for fame is visible enough, we ought to remember, in justice to Turner, that it has been shared by many other benevolent persons who have not thought it necessary to hide their lights under a bushel. George Heriot, of Edinburgh, immortalised himself in Heriot's Hospital, Mr.

Peabody has recently immortalised himself in the admirable and fruitful project which bears his name, and a thousand other benefactors of minor note have preserved their names for posterity in less conspicuous places. We need not then blame Turner because he obeyed the impulses of an instinct which is common to so many, and desired to be remembered with gratitude for his benevolence, as well as with admiration for his genius as an artist. The benevolence was real; there can be no doubt that Turner enjoyed a real satisfaction in the conviction that every sovereign he put by would lessen the burden of some future distress. Let us rejoice that his kind heart enjoyed the happiness of this illusion during the long days of his solitary labours. It must have been sweet to him, it must have enabled him to look forward to the close of his own life with the enviable assurance that it would be the beginning of a new usefulness in the world. And why, with a resolution in his mind so long cherished, so firmly rooted there, could not Turner ensure the execution of his desire? How does it happen that no distress is to be alleviated by the money which he accumulated for the purpose, that there is to be no 'Turner's Gift,' that the old age of unfortunate English artists is still to be wretched and uncared for? Was not Turner's intention plain? The reader shall judge of this for himself. Here is an extract from his will:

'It is my will and I direct that a Charitable Institution be founded for the maintenance and support of Poor and Decayed Male Artists being born in England and of English parents only and lawful issue. And I direct

that a proper and suitable Building or Residence be provided for that purpose in such a situation as may be deemed eligible and advantageous by my Executors and the Trustees to the said Charitable Institution.' (Here follow directions about the appointment of trustees.) 'And I declare that they shall be at liberty and have power in case they shall think it necessary for the more effectually and better establishment of the (Charitable) Institution to sell only part of the principal of the said Stock for the purpose of building a proper and fit house for the reception of the objects or the said Institution or that the said Trustees shall or may rent a proper house and offices for that purpose as they shall think fit and as shall be allowed by law but so that there shall always remain a sufficient amount of Stock to produce dividends and interest equal to the full maintenance and support of the respective individuals and the houses or buildings and premises before mentioned and which (Charitable) Institution I desire shall be called or designated "Turner's Gift" and shall at all times decidedly be an English Institution and the persons receiving the benefits thereof shall be English-born subjects only and of no other Nation or Country whatever.'

Here we have Turner trying to imitate the technical language of the lawyers, and it appears that he was not successful in his imitation, for the lawyers decided that the words which the reader has just been perusing did not convey to their minds the idea that Turner intended to found a charitable institution for decayed male artists. A writer of books may not understand legal mysteries, but he may have an opinion about the intelligibility of a page, and I appeal to the reader whether the above quotation does or does not convey the idea that Turner

intended to found some sort of institution to be called 'Turner's Gift,' in which decayed male artists of English blood were to find a refuge in their poverty and distress? Every candid reader going by the plain meaning of the words will at once admit that such was Turner's intention, and he will feel astonished that it was not carried out. Not only was this his intention, but it was his *main* intention, his great purpose, so far as his money was concerned. The lawyers, however, decided otherwise, and settled the matter in their own way. They followed the will on three points which were certainly not more plain than the foundation of 'Turner's Gift.' They gave the pictures to the National Gallery, a thousand pounds for the erection of a monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, and twenty thousand pounds to the Royal Academy. These were really bequests of Turner's, but then the legal authorities passed over the charitable institution for decayed artists as a thing not really intended by Turner, and did not even attempt a partial realisation of his idea, but decided that the real estate was to go to the heir-at-law and the remainder to the next-of-kin. Such was the result of a great Chancery suit, which occupied four years, during which the lawyers and their clerks industriously covered an enormous weight of paper, which nobody will ever read and which had to be paid for out of the painter's savings, a singular consequence of his own parsimony and love of secrecy which had prevented him from procuring competent legal assistance during his lifetime.

After the settlement of the will and the annihilation of Turner's charitable schemes, the most important

matter as affecting the public was the disposal of the pictures left to the nation. They were first exhibited in Marlborough House, and when that residence had to be prepared for the Prince of Wales, rooms for their reception were erected at South Kensington, at a cost of ten thousand pounds. Turner's will had required that rooms should be provided in the National Gallery within ten years after his death, and although during their stay at Kensington the pictures were under the control of the trustees of the National Gallery, and were supposed to belong to it, still they were not actually housed in the same building with the old masters, which was evidently Turner's desire. It therefore became necessary to find room for them in Trafalgar Square, and this was done (October, 1861) in accordance with a plan devised by Mr. Wornum, then the Keeper of the National Gallery, who lodged them to the west of the building, where they were well lighted and could be studied with great facility. Since then the Royal Academy has removed to Burlington House, the National Gallery has been greatly enlarged, the pictures have been all re-hung, and a new room has been given to the principal Turners, in which, unfortunately, they are not so well seen as under the former temporary arrangement. A very plain room on the ground-floor has been assigned for the preservation of the drawings, a room which, though sufficiently spacious, is certainly too mean in its appearance to contain artistic treasures of such value. Material treasure of greater amount is no doubt lodged in the cellars of the Bank of England, but the fine arts require some degree of elegance in their surroundings, and this room

has no more pretension to taste or elegance than a London cellar-kitchen. However, in spite of this unsuitableness of aspect, the place is a safe asylum for these abundant records of Turner's artistic existence, and there they may remain for future generations to refer to them. It is to be regretted that, according to present arrangements, they are not so easily accessible to students as they ought to be. They are only to be seen on special days, with a special order from the keeper. For permanent residents in London this is not a great inconvenience, because they can distribute their work accordingly; but for visitors from the country, and still more from foreign countries, who can only spend a few weeks at a time in London, the present arrangements amount to a practical prohibition of any continuous study, especially if it happens, as it happened in the autumn of 1876, that the keeper is unwell and the director is travelling abroad. The Turner drawings might be, and ought to be, made as accessible to students as the prints in the British Museum.

Mr. Ruskin, as one of Turner's executors, asked and obtained permission from the trustees of the National Gallery to arrange the drawings as he thought best for their preservation and for the convenience of students. Nothing could have been better devised, or more ably carried out, than Mr. Ruskin's plan, and the British public owes great thanks to him for his labour, though perhaps it may be surmised that the British public does not, as a body, take any very enthusiastic interest in the collection. Certainly the keeper of the Gallery is not deprived of his natural rest and sleep by public impor-

tunity for orders to view the Turnerian treasure. The following is Mr. Ruskin's own account of his labours amongst the immense mass of accumulated material that Turner left behind him.

'In seven tin boxes in the lower room of the National Gallery, I found upwards of nineteen thousand pieces of paper drawn upon by Turner in one way or another. Many on both sides; some with four, five, or six subjects on each side (the pencil-point digging spiritedly through from the foregrounds of the front into the tender pieces of sky on the back); some in chalk, which the touch of the finger would sweep away; others in ink, rolled into holes; others (some splendid coloured drawings among them), long eaten away by damp and mildew and falling into dust at the edges, in capes and bays of fragile decay; others worm-eaten, some mouse-eaten, many torn half-way through; numbers doubled (quadrupled, I should say) into four, being Turner's favourite mode of packing for travelling; nearly all rudely flattened out from the bundles in which Turner had finally rolled them up and squeezed them into his drawers in Queen Anne Street. Dust of thirty years accumulation, black, dense, and sooty, lay in the rents of the crushed and crumpled edges of these flattened bundles, looking like a jagged black frame, and producing altogether unexpected effects in brilliant portions of skies, where an accidental or experimental finger-mark of the first bundle unfolder had swept it away.

'About half, or rather more, of the entire number consisted of pencil sketches, in flat oblong pocket-books, dropping to pieces at the back, tearing laterally whenever opened, and every drawing rubbing itself into the one opposite. These first I paged with my own hand;

then unbound; and laid every leaf separately in a clean sheet of perfectly smooth writing-paper, so that it might receive no further injury; then, enclosing the contents and boards of each book (usually ninety-two leaves, more or less drawn on both sides, with two sketches on the boards at the beginning and end) in a separate sealed packet, I returned it to its tin box. The loose sketches needed more trouble. The dust had first to be got off them (from the chalk ones it could only be blown off); then they had to be variously flattened; the torn ones to be laid down, the loveliest guarded, so as to prevent all future friction; and four hundred of the most characteristic framed and glazed, and cabinets constructed for them, which would admit of their free use by the public. With two assistants, I was at work all the autumn and winter of 1857, every day, all day long, and often far into the night."

The cabinets constructed for the four hundred drawings, which have been framed and glazed, are models of orderly and judicious arrangement, the drawings being at the same time protected from injury and easily accessible.

So now most things about Turner have been settled in one way or another. 'Turner's Gift,' to begin with, has been settled by simple annihilation of the whole project. The reception of his pictures by the National Gallery has been settled by the assignment of certain rooms, and his drawings honoured by decent burial in a sort of crypt, where, nevertheless, the exceptionally curious student will find them in such order as Turner himself could never have imagined or desired, thanks to the devotion of Mr. Ruskin. Turner's own mortal remains lie in the catacombs of St. Paul's, and the morn-

ment which he decreed to himself has been erected in the form of a statue.

Some artists, we are informed by Mr. Thornbury, 'wished to put a memorial tablet over the door of the house in Maiden Lane, where he was born, but the Board of Works refused to allow it.'

We have now followed to its last results one of the most remarkable of human lives, and we may ask ourselves, in quiet final reflection upon this great and singular existence, whether it was enviable or not. It had great elements of happiness, but certain other elements, almost equally necessary, were wanting. Seventy years of health, of plain, good, serviceable, robust health, may count for something, for much in the happiness of a human life. Careful habits in money matters and a constantly increasing power of earning money, secured Turner from pecuniary anxiety, one of the most wearing of all mental evils, at a very early age. He was soon independent, and had, what to him was a keen and continual satisfaction, the pleasure of growing gradually richer. He could therefore follow art for itself, with the independence of an amateur united to the skill of an accomplished artist, and this is a great happiness which makes a man very independent of society. He was recognised very early by the Academy, being admitted to its exhibitions in boyhood, to the associateship before youth was past, and to full membership in early manhood. He was not so fully or generally recognised in his lifetime as he is now, but it is a great mistake to suppose that he was always censured, ridiculed, or neglected; on the contrary, he enjoyed when living ten times the

fame of a fairly successful artist, and was far more fortunate in this respect than many of his most able predecessors. Finally, as we have seen, he had the singular good fortune of being abundantly celebrated by a writer on art, who, though he has not the accuracy of a judge, has a quality incomparably more influential, the eloquence of an advocate, a writer who is alone in his power of interesting the general public in matters connected with the fine arts, and whose books have a place in literature for their style, which will make them endure when sounder æsthetic doctrine, plainly expressed, will be passed over and forgotten.

But all these elements of good fortune in the life of Turner, health, wealth, and fame, with the happiness of following a beloved art from sunrise to sunset every day and from the dawn to the twilight of existence—all these things were not enough to constitute a happy life. The philosophical reader may answer this with the accepted doctrine that happiness, in all lives, is an unattainable illusion. So it is, no doubt, in any absolute completeness, but there are relative degrees of it, and we may say with confidence that Scott, though sorely tried, was a happier man than Byron, and Leslie assuredly a happier man than Haydon. Now, in the ordinary limited sense of the word 'happiness,' as we all understand it, the conclusion is that Turner, with all his success, never had his fair share of it. His high special culture, his low general culture, were both causes of isolation, for both knowledge and ignorance isolate us, each in its own way. But the greatest *hiatus* in Turner's life was that he never knew the happiness of marriage, for which his domestic

arrangements with his mistresses were not and could not be a compensation. Marriage is not essential to happiness; many a not unenviable life has been passed in celibacy; but soldiers and priests, amongst whom celibacy is most general, have constant fellowship with others in their own calling. Turner, with his solitary pursuit, had little of this fellowship; and a happy marriage, had it been his good fortune to make one, would probably have brought him into more natural relations with the human species. With the strong support of a firm and regular home affection, and the constant interest of a legitimate family growing up around him, Turner would have cared less for fame (which, after all, is a poor affair in comparison with these) and he would have been far less sensitive to criticism. He would have thought less about himself and his own greatness, and lived with less eager ambition. The contrast in this respect between Turner's life and that of the late J. F. Millet shows Turner's loneliness in its true light. Millet had a hard fight even for the necessaries of existence, but he lived in perfect dignity in his quiet corner of the little village of Barbizon, sustained by the truest and tenderest affection, or affections, we may well say in the plural seeing that besides his wife he had nine children to love him, and a few dear friends and neighbours. No man could be more respected than Millet was, and he lived surrounded by the influences of a home which, notwithstanding his narrow means, was ten times as cheerful as any that Turner ever possessed. I have been in both, and have felt in both the indescribable influence of a human habitation, of the things that surround a man,

and the difference was briefly this. Millet had a home in that humble dwelling on the forest border of Fontainebleau, and Turner had no home in that dreary, dirty mansion in Queen Anne Street. And what are wealth and fame as motives for exertion in comparison with love and duty?

NOTE.

MR. RUSKIN'S TEACHING.

FROM a desire to preserve the unity of the Life of Turner, I determined to notice Mr. Ruskin's teaching only just so far as it directly concerned Turner's biography, or the qualities of his art. There are, however, some general doctrines which Mr. Ruskin has proclaimed in comparatively recent times, and which affect the reputation of Turner, by including or by excluding his works, or the interpretations of them, so that, though I did not criticise these general doctrines in the body of my book, it is hardly possible to leave them to work their evil effects on the public mind without some sort of protest.

1. In the Lectures delivered at Oxford, and published at the Clarendon Press in 1870, a passage occurs (Lect. V., 129) in which Mr. Ruskin emphatically approves the childish doctrine of Leonardo da Vinci, that the best painting is that which most nearly resembles the reflection of nature in a mirror. The same doctrine is repeated at the end of the lecture on the technics of wood-engraving, when Mr. Ruskin says: 'Understand clearly and finally this simple principle of all art, that the best is that which realises absolutely, if possible. Here is a viper by Carpaccio: you are afraid to go near it. Here is an arm-chair by Carpaccio: you who came in late, and are standing, to my regret, would like to sit down in it.'

This is a return to the primitive conception of art, and I need hardly observe that it would exclude Turner's works from the rank of what is best, as nothing could be more remote from the reflection in a mirror, or from the realisation which may deceive, than the treatment which Turner applied to the materials which he found in nature. This is true, not only of his landscapes, but even of his

studies in still life, which are too refined for realisation, and never resemble the reflection of the objects in a mirror.

2. Mr. Ruskin said in his lecture on the Technics of wood-engraving, 'that fine metal engraving, like fine wood-cutting, ignores light and shade; and that, in a word, *all good engraving whatsoever does so.*'

I need hardly observe that this doctrine, if it were true, would exclude from the rank of good engraving the entire series of plates from Turner's works, executed by the most eminent landscape-engravers of this century, for these engravers have never ignored light and shade. Happily, the doctrine is not true.

3. Mr. Ruskin (who has a bitter enmity against etching) says at the end of his lecture on Design in the German Schools: 'Etching is an indolent and blundering method at the best.' If this were true, Turner would have been an indolent blunderer when he etched the plates in the 'Liber Studiorum.' I need not observe that etching has been practised by some of the most eminent painters who ever lived, and who would not have used a bad process, but I may add that etching is greatly admired and approved of by many most eminent painters who have not time to practise it themselves. I have peculiar opportunities for knowing this through frequent correspondence, as Editor of the *Portfolio*, with many of the greatest artists in the world. Even Mr. Ruskin himself can sometimes forget his animosity against the art, as for example in the following sentence, which is directly contradictory of the assertion that etching is an indolent and blundering method at the best: 'The *etching* of Gérôme's Louis XIV. and Molière *is one of the completest pieces of skilful mechanism ever put on metal.*'

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